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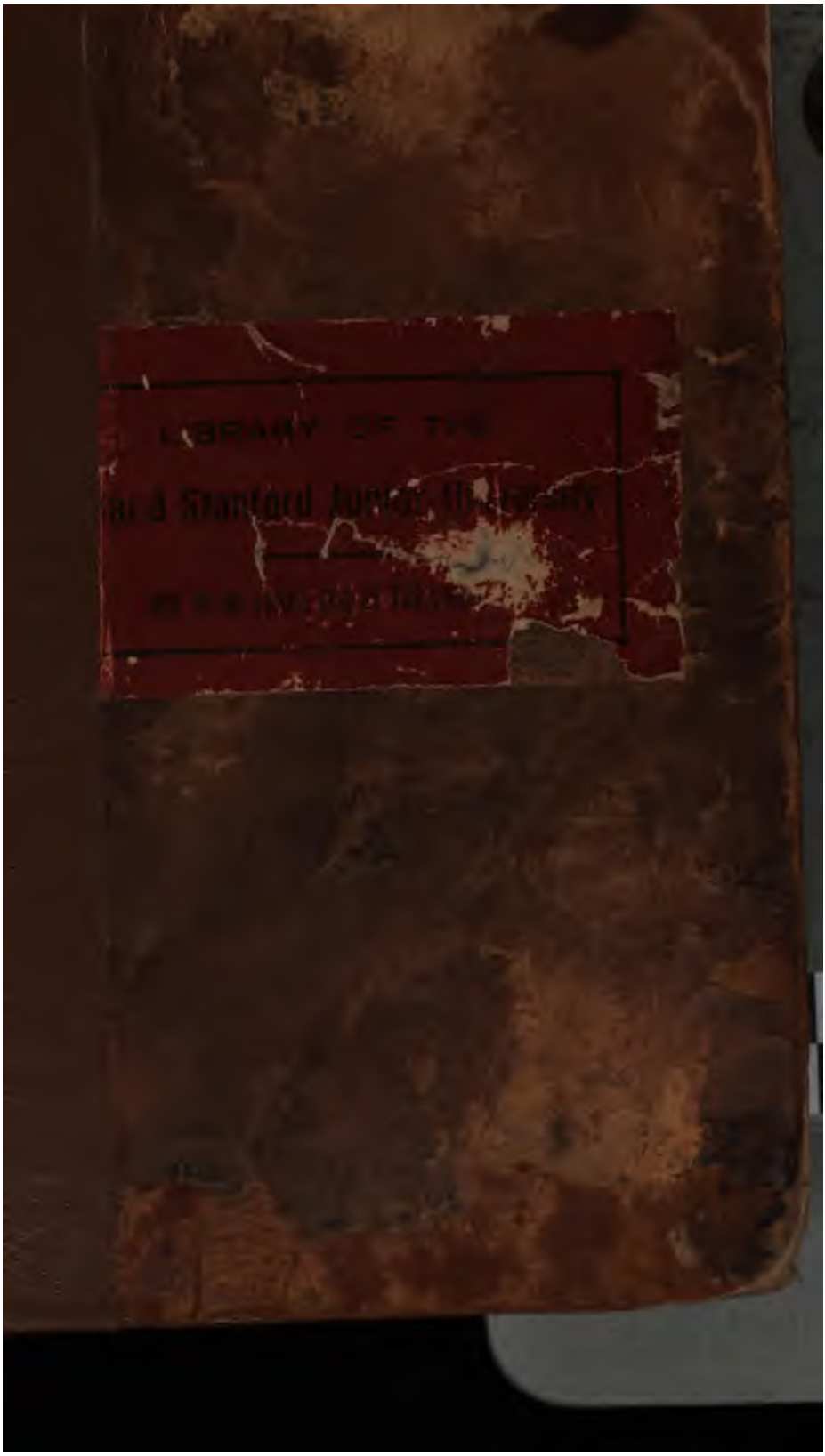
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THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE.

TRANSLATED

FROM THE FRENCH OF LE SAGE.

BY T. SMOLLET, M. D.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE AUTHOR.

IT is rather singular that the French should have been so silent on the life and conduct of their first novelist. They have nothing in their language comparable to Gil Blas: but the memory of the author has been consigned to a very few scanty notices, and, at this distance from the period of his death, little more can be recovered of one of the most humorous, and, at the same time, most easy, natural, and unaffected writers.

ALAIN RENE LE SAGE was born, according to one of his biographers, in 1677,

at Ruys, in Britanny; or, according to another, in 1668, at Vannes. At the age of twenty-five he came to Paris, with a view to study philosophy. His talents, although they did not display themselves very early, proved to be equally brilliant and solid. He made himself first known by a paraphrastic translation of the Letters of Aristenetus, which he published in two small volumes. He then travelled through Spain, and applied to the study of the Spanish language, customs, and writers, from whom he adopted plots and fables, and transfused them into his native tongue with great facility and success. His works of this kind are, Guzman de Alfarache; the Bachelor of Salamanca; Gil Blas; New Adventures of Don Quixote, originally written by Avellaneda; the Devil on Two Sticks; and some others of less note. Of the Devil on Two Sticks, we are told that the first edition had amazing success, and the second sold with still greater rapidity. Two noblemen coming to the bookseller's, found only one single copy remaining, which each was for purchasing; and the dispute grew so warm, that they were going to decide it by the sword, had not the bookseller interposed.

He was also distinguished for some dramatic pieces, of which Crispin, and Turcaret, both comedies, were the most successful, and allowed to fall very little short of the genius of Moliere. Turcaret, which was first played in 1709, has been praised by the French critics, as comprehending a dialogue just and natural, characters drawn with peculiar fidelity, and a well-conducted plot. He composed also many pieces for the comic opera, which, if somewhat deficient in invention, were in general sprightly, and enriched with borrowed fancies very happily adapted to the genius of the French theatre.

When a favourite with the town, he appears to have presumed a little on that circumstance. It was his custom to read his plays in certain fashionable circles, before they were publicly represented. On one of those occasions, when engaged to read a piece at the duchess de Bouillon's, an unexpected affair detained him until a considerable time after the appointed hour. The duchess, on his entrance, began to reproach him, but with pleasantry, for his having made the company lose two hours in waiting for him. "If I have made them lose them," said Le Sage, "nothing can be more easy

than to recover them. I will not read my play;" and immediately took his leave: nor could any invitation induce him to visit the duchess a second time.

He had several children, the eldest of whom was long a distinguished actor on the French stage, under the name of Montmenil; and, amidst all the temptations of a theatrical life, was a man of irreproachable character. He died suddenly while partaking of the pleasures of the chase, Sept. 8, 1743.

His death was a loss to the public, and particularly to his father, who was now grown old, and had been poorly rewarded by the age which he contributed so often to entertain. He was likewise at this time very deaf, and obliged to have recourse to an ear-trumpet, which he used in a manner that bespoke the old humourist. It was his practice to take it out of his pocket when he had reason to think that his company was composed of men of genius; but he very gravely replaced it, when he found that they were of an inferior stamp.

This infirmity, however, depriving him of the most rational pleasures of society, he

left Paris for Boulogne-sur-mer, in the cathedral of which one of his sons held a canonry: and although of an advanced age, Le Sage left the metropolis of taste, literature, and gaiety, with considerable regret. He did not enjoy his retirement long, being cut off by a severe illness, Nov. 17, 1747, in his eightieth year. He was interred at Boulogne, with the following epitaph:

Sous ce tombeau git Le Sage, abattu
Par le ciseau de la Parque importune:
S'il ne fut pas ami de la Fortune,
Il fut toujours ami de la Vertu.

His character is said to have been truly amiable, and his conduct strictly moral and correct, free from ambition, and one who courted fortune no farther than was necessary to enjoy the pleasures and quiet of a literary life.

Of all his works, that now presented to the reader is by far the most popular, and deservedly ranks very high among the productions of historical fancy It has been, we believe, translated into every European language, and received in all nations as a faithful portrait of human nature. Few books have been so frequently quoted, as affording happy illustrations of general manners, and

of the common caprices and infirmities incident to man. "Le Sage," says Dr. Moore, "proves himself to have been intimately acquainted with human nature." And as the moral tendency of the character of Gil Blas has been sometimes questioned, the same author very properly remarks, that he never intended that character as a model of imitation. His object seems to have been to exhibit men as they are, not as they ought to be. For this purpose he chooses a youth of no extraordinary talents, and without steady principles, open to be duped by knavery, and perverted by example. He sends him like a spaniel, through the open fields, the coverts, the giddy heights, and latent tracts of life, to raise the game at which he wishes to shoot; and few moral huntsmen ever afforded more entertaining sport.

The popularity of this novel, which equals that of almost any of our own most favourite productions, may afford a lesson to the writers of fiction, who are ambitious that their works should live. Had Le Sage drawn those extravagant and distorted characters which are so common in the novels published within the last twenty years, he could not have expected that they would outlive the novelty

of a first perusal: but depicting nature, and nature only, as he found her in men of all ranks and stations, he knew that what would please now would please for ever, and that he was speaking a language that would be understood in every spot of the globe. The artifices of refined and highly polished society may have introduced variations and disguises which give an air of novelty to the actions of men; but original manners and caprices, such as Le Sage has described, will perhaps at all times be acknowledged to be just, natural, and faithful, whether we apply the test of self-examination, or have recourse to the more easy practice of remarking the conduct of those with whom we associate.

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THE

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.

AS there are some people who cannot read without making applications of the vicious and ludicrous characters they meet with in works of this kind, I declare to these mischievous readers, that they will be to blame, if they apply any of the pictures drawn in this book. I publicly own that my purpose is to represent life as we find it: but God forbid that I should undertake to delineate any man in particular! Let no reader, therefore, assume to himself that which properly belongs to others, lest, as Phædrus observes, he make an unlucky discovery of his own character. *Stulte nudabit animi conscientiam.* There are physicians in Castile, as

well as in France, whose practice consists in evacuating their patients a little too much; and the same vices and peculiarities of disposition are to be seen every where. I confess that I have not always exactly observed the manners of the Spaniards; and those who are acquainted with the disorderly lives of the players at Madrid may reproach me with having described their irregularities with too much tenderness: but I thought it was necessary to soften them a little, that they might be the more conformable to the manners of our own country.

GIL BLAS

TO THE READER.

GENTLE reader, before thou hearest the history of my life, give me leave to entertain thee with a short story.

Two scholars on their way from Pennafiel to Salamanca, being thirsty and fatigued, sat down by a spring they met with on the road. There, while they rested themselves, after having quenched their thirst, they perceived, by accident, upon a stone that was even with the surface of the earth, some letters, already half effaced by time, and the feet of flocks that came to water at the fountain: having

washed it, they read these words in the Castilian tongue:---*Aqui est a encerrada el alma del Licenciado Pedro Garcias.* "Here is interred the soul of the Licentiate Peter Garcias." The younger of the two students being a pert coxcomb, no sooner read this inscription, than he cried with a loud laugh, "A good joke i'faith! Here is interred the soul---a soul interred!---Who the devil could be the author of such a wise epitaph!" So saying, he got up and went away; while his companion, who was blessed with a greater share of penetration, said to himself, "There is certainly some mystery in this affair: I'll stay in order to unriddle it." Accordingly, his comrade was no sooner out of sight, than he began to dig with his knife all around the stone; and succeeded so well, that he got it up, and found beneath it a leathern purse, containing a hundred ducats, and a card, on which was written the following sentence in Latin: "Whosoever thou art who hast wit enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, inherit my money, and make a better use of it than I have done." The scholar, rejoicing at his good fortune, placed the stone in its former situation, and walked home to Salamanca with the soul of the licentiate.

Of what complexion soever thou mayest be, friendly reader, thou wilt certainly resemble one of those two scholars: for if thou perusest my adventures, without perceiving the moral instructions they contain, thou wilt reap no harvest from thy labour: but if thou readest with attention, thou wilt find in them, according to the precept of Horace, profit mingled with pleasure.

GIL BLAS

OF

SANTILLANE.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

My father, Blas of Santillane, after having carried arms many years for the service of the Spanish monarchy, retired to the town in which he was born, where he chose a wife among the second-rate citizens, who, though she was no chicken, brought me into the world ten months after her marriage.—They afterwards removed to Oviedo, where my mother became a waiting-woman, and my father squire * to a lady: and as they had nothing but

* Squire, or gentlemen-usher, in Spanish Escudero, is a person that waits on a lady. Formerly, decayed gentlemen were entertained by the nobility for this purpose. They took their appellation from those eminent squires whose office was to carry the shield (in Spain, called Escudo) of their master.

their wages to depend upon, I should have run the hazard of being very poorly educated, had it not been my good fortune to have a canon for my uncle, whose name was Gil Peres: he was my mother's eldest brother, as well as my god-father, a little man, three feet and an half high, excessive fat, with his head sunk between his shoulders; otherwise an honest priest, whose chief care was to live well; that is to make good cheer; and his living, which was no lean one, furnished him with the means.

He carried me home to his house while an infant, taking charge of my education; and I appeared so sprightly, that he resolved to cultivate my genius. With this view he bought for me an horn-book, and undertook (himself) to learn me to read; a task no less useful to him than to me: for, in teaching me my letters, he had recourse to his reading, which he had always neglected too much: and, by dint of application, enabled himself to read his breviary without hesitation; a qualification he had never been possessed of before.—He had all the inclination in the world to instruct me in the Latin tongue also, because it would have been so much money saved to him: but, alas, poor Gil Peres! he had never in his life understood the rudiments of that language, and was, perhaps, (but this I do not vouch for a certainty) the most illiterate canon of the whole chapter.—I have been told, indeed, that he had not obtained his benefice by his erudition; but owed it entirely to the gratitude of some pious nuns, for whom he had acted the part of a zealous commissioner, and by whose influence the order of priesthood had been conferred upon him without examination.

He was therefore obliged to subject me to the birch of a school-master, and accordingly sent me to the house of doctor Godinez, who was reckoned the most expert flogger in Oviedo. I improved so well under his instructions, that in five or six years

I understood a little Greek, was a pretty good Latin scholar; and applying myself also to logic, began to argue apace: I was so much in love with dispute, that I stopped passengers, known, or unknown, and proposed arguments to them; and sometimes meeting with Hibernian geniuses, who were very glad of the occasion, it was a good jest to see us dispute: by our extravagant gestures, grimace, contortions, our eyes full of fury, and our mouths full of foam, one would have taken us for bedlamites rather than philosophers.

By these means, however, I acquired the reputation of a great scholar in town; a circumstance that pleased my uncle extremely, as he foresaw that I should not be much longer an expence to him.—"Harkee, Gil Blas (said he to me one day,) thou art no longer a child, and it is high time for a brisk lad of seventeen, like thee, to push thy fortune in the world: I am determined to send thee to Salamanca, where, with such genius and learning, thou canst not fail of obtaining some good post: thou shalt have some ducats in thy pocket to bear thy expences on the road; and I will give thee my own mule, which thou mayest sell at Salamanca for ten or twelve pistoles, and live upon the money until thou shalt be settled to thy satisfaction."

He could not have proposed any thing more agreeable to me, for I passionately longed to see the world: nevertheless, I had discretion enough to conceal my joy; and when the time of my departure arrived, affecting the most lively sorrow at leaving an uncle, to whom I owed so many obligations, the honest man was melted, and gave me more money than he would have done, could he have seen to the bottom of my heart.—Before I set out I went to take leave of my father and mother, who enriched me with advice, exhorted me to pray to God for my uncle, to live inoffensively, to eschew evil, and by all means to refrain from stealing.—After they had held forth a good while, they

made me a present of their blessing, which was all I expected from them; and I, mounting my mule, bad adieu to Oviedo.

CHAPTER II.

Behold me then in the open field, clear of Oviedo, on the road to Pennaflor, master of my conduct, of a sorry mule, and forty good ducats, exclusive of some royals which I had stolen from my much honoured uncle.—The first thing I did was to let my beast go at discretion, that is, very gently; and throwing the bridle on her neck, I emptied my purse into my hat, and amused myself in counting my money: my joy was excessive; and as I had never seen so much cash before, I handled and gazed at it with insatiable delight.—I had reckoned it, perhaps, twenty times over, when, all of a sudden, my mule raising her head, and pricking up her ears, stopped in the middle of the highway. Imagining she was frightened at something, I looked about to see what was the matter, and perceived upon the ground an old hat, turned up, with a rosary of great beads in it; at the same time heard a lamentable voice pronounce these words: "Mr. Traveller, for God's sake, have pity on a poor maimed soldier; drop, if you please, a few bits into the hat, and you shall be rewarded in heaven."—I turned my eyes immediately on the side from whence the voice issued, and saw, at the root of a bush, about twenty or thirty paces from me, a kind of soldier, who upon two cross sticks, supported the barrel of a carbine, in my apprehension longer than a pike, with which he seemed to take aim at me: at this apparition, which made me

quake for the church's money, I stopt short, and, pocketing my ducats in a great hurry, took out some rials, approaching the hat, that was exposed for the reception of extorted charity, and dropped them into it, one after another, that the beggar might see how nobly I used him.—He was satisfied with my bounty, and gave me a benediction for every kick that I bestowed on the sides of my mule, in order to get out of his reach; but the plaguy beast, regardless of my impatience, moved not a step the faster, having lost the power of galloping, by a long habit of carrying my uncle at his own leisure.

I did not look upon this adventure as a very favourable omen for my journey; I considered that I might meet with something still worse before I should arrive at Salamanca; and could not help blaming my uncle's imprudence, for having neglected to put me under the direction of a carrier. This, to be sure, was what he ought to have done, but he imagined that, by giving me his mule, my journey would be the less expensive; and he had more regard to that consideration, than to the dangers I might be exposed to on the road.—In order therefore to repair his mismanagement, I determined (as soon as I should arrive at Pennaflor) to sell the mule, and take the opportunity of a carrier for Astorga, from whence I could transport myself to Salamanca by the same convenience; for, although I had never been out of Oviedo, I was not ignorant of the names of the towns through which I must pass, having informed myself of these things before I set out.

I arrived in safety at Pennaflor, and, halting at the gate of an inn that made a tolerable appearance, I no sooner alighted than the landlord came out, and received me with great civility; he untied my portmanteau with his own hands, and, throwing it on his shoulder, conducted me into a room, while one of his servants led my mule into the stable.—

This inn-keeper, the greatest talker of the Asturies, and as ready to relate his own affairs, without being asked, as to pry into those of another, told me that his name was Andrew Corcuelo; that he had served many years in the king's army, in quality of a serjeant; and had quitted the service fifteen months ago, to marry a damsel of Castropol, who (though she was a little swarthy) knew very well how to turn the penny. He said a thousand other things, which I could have dispensed with the hearing of, but after having made me his confidant, he thought he had a right to exact the same condescension from me; and accordingly asked whence I came, whither I was going, and what I was.—I was obliged to answer, article by article, because he accompanied every question with a profound bow, and begged me to excuse his curiosity with such a respectful air, that I could not refuse to satisfy him in every particular.—This engaged me in a long conversation with him, and gave me occasion to mention my design, and the reasons I had for disposing of my mule, that I might take the opportunity of a carrier.—He approved of my intention, though not in a very succinct manner; for he represented all the troublesome accidents that might befall me on the road, he recounted many dismal stories of travellers, and I was afraid he would never have done: he concluded at length, however, telling me, that if I had a mind to sell my mule, he was acquainted with a very honest jockey who would buy her. I assured him he would oblige me in sending for him; upon which he went in quest of him immediately with great eagerness. —It was not long before he returned with his man, whom he introduced to me as a person of exceeding honesty, and we went into the yard all together, where my mule was produced, and passed and repassed before the jockey, who examined her from head to foot, and did not fail to speak very disadvantageously of her. I own there was not much

to be said in her praise; but, however, had it been the pope's mule, he would have found some defect in her. He assured me, that she had all the faults a mule could have; and, to convince me of his veracity, appealed to the landlord, who, doubtless, had his reasons for supporting his friend's assertions.—"Well (said this dealer with an air of indifference) how much money do you expect for this wretched animal?" After the eulogium he had bestowed on her, and the attestation of Signor Corcuelo, whom I believed to be a man of honesty and understanding, I would have given my mule for nothing; and therefore told him I would rely on his integrity; bidding him appraise the beast in his own conscience, and I would stand to the valuation. Upon this he assumed the man of honour, and replied, that in engaging his conscience I took him on the weak side: in good sooth, that did not seem to be his strong side: for instead of valuing her at ten or twelve pistoles, as my uncle had done, he fixed the price at three ducats, which I accepted with as much joy as if I had made an excellent bargain.

After having so advantageously disposed of my mule, the landlord conducted me to a carrier, who was to set out the next day for Astorga.—This muleteer let me know, that he would depart before day-break, and promised to wake me in time, after we had agreed upon the price, as well for the hire of a mule as for my board on the road; and when every thing was settled between us, I returned to the inn with Corcuelo, who, by the way, began to recount the carrier's history; he told me every circumstance of his character in town, and, in short, was going to stupify me again with his intolerable loquacity, when, luckily for me, a man of a pretty good appearance prevented my misfortune, by accosting him with great civility.—I left them togegether, and went on, without suspecting that I had the least concern in their conversation.

When I arrived at the inn I called for supper, and, it being a meager day, was fain to put up with eggs; which while they got ready, I made up to my landlady, whom I had not seen before; she appeared handsome enough, and withal so sprightly and gay, that I should have concluded (even if her husband had not told me so) that her house was pretty well frequented.—When the amlet I had bespoke was ready, I sat down to table by myself; and had not yet swallowed the first morsel when the landlord came in, followed by the man who had stopped him in the street. This cavalier, who wore a long sword, and seemed to be about thirty years of age, advanced towards me with an eager air, saying, "Mr. Student, I am informed that you are that Signor Gil Blas of Santillane, who is the link of philosophy, and ornament of Oviedo! Is it possible that you are that mirror of learning, that sublime genius, whose reputation is so great in this country?—You know not (continued he, addressing himself to the inn-keeper and his wife) you know not what you possess! You have a treasure in your house! Behold, in this young gentleman, the eighth wonder of the world!" Then turning to me, and throwing his arms about my neck, "Forgive (cried he) my transports! I cannot contain the joy that your presence creates!"

I could not answer for some time, because he locked me so close in his arms, that I was almost suffocated for want of breath; and it was not till I had disengaged my head from his embrace, that I replied; "Signor Cavalier, I did not think my name was known at Pennaflor."——"How! known (resumed he in his former strain) we keep a register of all the celebrated names within twenty leagues of us:—you, in particular, are looked upon as a prodigy, and I don't at all doubt that Spain will one day be as proud of you, as Greece was of her seven sages." These words were followed by a fresh hug, which I was enforced to endure, though at the

risk of strangulation. With the little experience I had, I ought not to have been the dupe of his professions and hyperbolical compliments: I ought to have known, by his extravagant flattery, that he was one of those parasites which abound in every town, and who, when a stranger arrives, introduce themselves to him, in order to fill their bellies at his expence: but my youth and vanity made me judge quite otherwise: my admirer appeared to me so much of a gentleman, that I invited him to take a share of my supper. "Ah! with all my soul (cried he) I am too much obliged to my kind stars for having thrown me in the way of the illustrious Gil Blas, not to enjoy my good fortune as long as I can! I have no great appetite (pursued he) but I will sit down to bear you company, and eat a mouthful, purely out of complaisance."

So saying, my panegyrist took his place right over-against me, and, a cover being laid for him, attacked the amlet as voraciously as if he had fasted three whole days: by his complaisant beginning I foresaw that our dish would not last long, and therefore ordered a second; which they dressed with such dispatch, that it was served just as we—or rather he—had made an end of the first.—He proceeded on this with the same vigour, and found means, without losing one stroke of his teeth, to overwhelm me with praises during the whole repast, which made me very well pleased with my sweet self.—He drank in proportion to his eating; sometimes to my health, sometimes to that of my father and mother, whose happiness in having such a son as me he could not enough admire.—In the mean time he plied me with wine, and insisted upon my doing him justice, while I toasted health for health; a circumstance which, together with his intoxicating flattery, put me into such good humour, that seeing our second amlet half devoured, I asked the landlord if he had no fish in the house. Signor Corcuelo, who, in all likelihood, had a fellow feel-

ing with the parasite, replied, "I have a delicate trout, but those who eat it must pay for the sauce: —'t is a bit too dainty for your palate, I doubt."— "What do you call too dainty? (said the sycophant, raising his voice) you're a wiseacre, indeed! Know that there is nothing in this house too good for Signor Gil Blas de Santillane, who deserves to be entertained like a prince."

I was pleased at his laying hold of the landlord's last words, in which he prevented me, who finding myself offended, said with an air of disdain, "Produce this trout of your's, gaffer Corcuelo, and give yourself no trouble about the consequence."—This was what the inn-keeper wanted: he got it ready, and served it up in a trice. At sight of this new dish I could perceive the parasite's eyes sparkle with joy; and he renewed that complaisance—I mean for the fish—which he had already shown for the eggs. At last, however, he was obliged to give out, for fear of accident, being crammed to the very throat: having therefore eaten and drank his bellyful, he thought proper to conclude the farce by rising from table, and accosting me in these words: "Signor Gil Blas, I am too well satisfied with your good cheer to leave you, without offering an important advice, which you seem to have great occasion for: henceforth beware of praise, and be upon your guard against every body you do not know. You may meet with other people inclined to divert themselves with your credulity, and perhaps to push things still farther; but don't be duped again, nor believe yourself (though they should swear it) the eighth wonder of the world."—So saying, he laughed in my face and stalked away. I was as much affected by this bite as I have since been by misfortunes of far greater consequence.—I could not forgive myself for having been so grossly imposed upon; or rather, I was shocked to find my pride so humbled: "How! (said I to myself) has the traitor then made a jest of me? His design in

accosting my landlord in the street was only to pump him: or perhaps they understand one another! Ah! simple Gil Blas! Go hang thyself for shame, for having given such rascals an opportunity of turning thee into ridicule! I suppose they will trump up a fine story of this affair, which will reach Oviedo, and doubtless do thee a great deal of honour; and make thy parents repent their having thrown away so much good council on an ass: instead of exhorting me not to wrong any body, they ought to have cautioned me against the knavery of the world!" Chagrined with these mortifying reflections, and inflamed with resentment, I locked myself in my chamber, and went to bed, where, however, I did not sleep; for, before I could close my eyes, the carrier came to let me know that he was ready to set out, and only waited for me: I got up instantly, and while I put on my clothes Corcuelo brought me a bill, in which, I assure you, the trout was not forgotten: and I was not only obliged to gratify his exorbitance, but I had also the mortification to perceive, while I counted the money, that the sarcastic knave remembered my adventure. After having paid sauce for a supper, which I had so ill digested, I went to the muleteer with my bags, wishing the parasite, the inn-keeper, and his inn, at the devil.

CHAPTER III.

I WAS not the only person who travelled with the carrier, there being in company two children belonging to a gentleman at Pennaflor, a little stroling ballad-singer of Mondonedo, and a young tradesman of Astorga, who was bringing home a

girl whom he had married at Verco. We became acquainted with one another presently, and every one, in a very short time, told whence he came, and whither he was going.—The new married lady was so stupid and tawny, that I had no great pleasure in looking at her; but her youth and plumpness had a different effect upon the carrier, who resolved to make an attempt upon her inclinations: he spent the whole day in projecting this noble design, the execution of which he deferred until we should arrive at our last stage, which happened to be at Cacabelos. He accordingly made us alight at the first inn we came to, a house situated rather in the country than the town, the landlord of which he knew to be a complaisant and discreet person. He took care to have us conducted into a remote apartment, where he allowed us to sup in tranquillity; but when our meal was ended, he entered with a furious look, crying "Blood and oons! I am robbed of one hundred pistoles, which I had in a leathern bag, and I must find them immediately; otherwise I will apply to the magistrate of the place, who is no joker in these matters, and have you all put to the rack, till such time as you confess the crime and restore the money." Having pronounced these dreadful words with a very natural air, he went out, leaving us all in the utmost consternation.

As we were strangers to each other, none of us had the least suspicion of the finesse; for my own part, I suspected that the poor ballad-singer had done the deed; and perhaps he had the same opinion of me. Besides, we were all raw fools, utterly ignorant of the formalities used in such cases, and believed in good earnest, that the process would be begun by putting us all to torture.—Giving way therefore to our fear, we evacuated the room in a great hurry, some running into the street, others flying into the garden, and every one betaking himself to his heels for safety. Among the rest

the young tradesman of Astorga, as much scared as any of us at the thoughts of the torture, made his escape, like another Æneas, without incommoding himself with his wife.—It was then that the carrier (as I have since learned) more incontinent than his mules, and overjoyed to see his stratagem succeed according to his expectation, went to the bride, boasted of his own ingenuity, and endeavoured to profit by the occasion:—but this Lucrece of the Asturies, to whom the villanous aspect of her tempter lent new strength, made a vigorous resistance, and screamed most powerfully. The patrole, which happened at that instant to pass by the house, that they knew deserved their attention, went in and demanded the reasons of those cries: upon which the landlord, who sat singing in the kitchen, and pretended to know nothing of the matter, was obliged to conduct the officer and his guard into the chamber of the person who made the noise.—They arrived very seasonably, the chaste Asturian being quite exhausted; and the commander (who was none of the most delicate people in the world) perceiving what was the matter, gave the amorous muleteer a wooden salutation with the handle of his halbert, addressing him at the same time in terms as inconsistent with modesty as the action that suggested them.—This was not all: he apprehended the criminal, and carried him before the judge, together with his accuser; who, notwithstanding her disorder, would have gone of herself to crave justice for the outrage that was committed upon her. The magistrate having heard, and attentively considered the cause, found the defendant guilty, caused him to be stripped and scourged in his presence; and ordered that if the husband of the plaintiff should not appear before next day, she should be escorted to Astorga by two horsemen at the charge of the delinquent.

As for me, more terrified, perhaps, than the rest, I got into the country, and crossing, I don't know

how many fields and heaths, and leaping all the ditches I found in my way, I arrived at last at the side of a wood, and was just going into it, with a view of concealing myself in some thicket, when, all of a sudden two men on horseback appeared before me, and called, "Who goes there?" As my surprise hindered me from making immediate answer, they advanced, and each clapping a pistol to my throat, commanded me to tell who I was, whence I came, my business in that forest, and above all things, to hide nothing from them.—To these interrogations, the manner of which seemed to me equal to the rack with which the carrier had threatened us, I replied, that I was a lad of Oviedo, going to Salamanca; recounted the alarm we had undergone, and confessed, that the fear of being put to the torture had induced me to run away.—They burst out into a loud laugh at this discovery, which manifested the simplicity of my heart; and one of them said, "Take courage, friend; come along with us, and fear nothing: we will put thee in a place of safety." So saying, he made me get up behind him, and then we retreated into the wood.

Though I did not know what to make of this rencounter, I did not presage any thing bad from it; for (said I to myself) if these people were thieves, they would have robbed, and perhaps murdered me, at once: they must certainly be honest gentlemen, who live hard by, and who, seeing me in a panic, have pity on my condition, and carry me home with them out of charity.—But I did not long remain in suspense; for, after several windings and turnings, which we performed in great silence, we came to the foot of a hill, where we alighted; and one of the horsemen said to me, "This is our dwelling-place." I looked around, but could perceive neither house, hut, nor the least appearance of any habitation: nevertheless these two men lifted up a huge wooden trap-door, covered with earth

and brambles, which concealed the entrance of a long shelving passage under ground, into which the horses went of themselves, like beasts that were used to it; while the cavaliers, taking the same path, made me follow them: then lowering the cover, with cords fastened to the inside for that purpose, behold the worthy kinsman of my uncle Peres, caught like a mouse in a trap.

CHAPTER IV.

I NOW discovered my situation, and any one may easily believe that this discovery effectually dispelled my former fear: a terror more mighty and better founded took possession of my soul! I laid my account with losing my life as well as my ducats; and looking upon myself as a victim led to the altar, walked (more dead than alive) between my two conductors, who, feeling me tremble, exhorted me in vain to fear nothing.—When we had gone about 200 paces, turning and descending all the way, we entered into a stable, lighted by two great iron lamps, hanging from the arch above. Here I saw plenty of straw, and a good many casks full of provender: there was room enough for twenty horses: but at that time there were only the two that we brought along with us, which an old negro, who seemed vigorous for his years, was tying to a rack.—We went out of the stable, and by the dismal glimmer of some lamps, that seemed to enlighten the place, only to show the horrors of it, came to a kitchen, where an old cook-maid was busy in broiling steaks, and providing for supper.—The kitchen was adorned with all necessary utensils, and hard by there was a larder stored with all

sorts of provisions.—The cook (for I must draw her picture) was a person somewhat turned of sixty: in her youth the hair of her head had been red as a carrot; for time had not as yet so much bleached it, but that one might still perceive some shades of its primitive colour: she had an olive complexion, a chin pointed and prominent, with lips fallen in, a huge aquiline nose that hung over her mouth, and eyes that flamed in purple.

"Well, dame Leonarda (said one of the gentlemen, presenting me to this fair angel of darkness) here's a young man we have brought for you." Then turning to me, and observing me pale and dismayed, "Friend (said he) banish thy fear; we will do thee no harm—Having occasion for a servant to assist our cook-maid, we met with thee, and happy is it for thee we did: thou shalt here supply the place of a young fellow, who let himself die about fifteen days ago: he was a lad of a very delicate complexion; but thou seemest to be more robust, and wilt not die so soon: indeed thou wilt never see the light of the sun again; but in lieu of that, thou shalt have good cheer, and a rousing fire: thou shalt pass thy time with Leonarda, who is a very gentle creature, and enjoy all thy little conveniences. I will shew thee (added he) that thou hast not got among beggars." With these words he took up a flambeau, and, bidding me follow him, carried me into a cellar, where I saw an infinite number of bottles and jars well corked, which (he told me) were filled with excellent wine. He afterwards made me pass through divers apartments, some of which contained bales of linen, others of silks and stuffs: in one I perceived gold and silver, and a great quantity of plate in different cupboards. —Then I followed him into a large hall illuminated by three branches of copper, which also gave light to the rooms that communicated with it: here he put fresh questions to me; asked my name and reason for leaving Oviedo; and when I had satisfied

his curiosity in these particulars, " Well, Gil Blas, (said he) since thy design in quitting the place of thy nativity was to obtain some good post, thou must certainly have been born with a caul upon thy head; because thou hast fallen into our hands.—I have already told thee that thou shalt live here in affluence and roll upon gold and silver: nay more, thou shalt be safe; for such is the contrivance of this retreat, that the officers of the holy brotherhood may come into the wood an hundred times without discovering it. The entry is unknown to every living soul, except me and my comrades: perhaps thou wilt wonder how it could be executed without being perceived by the people in the neighbourhood! Know then, my lad, that this is not a work of our hands, but was made many years ago: for after the Moors had got possession of Grenada, Arragon, and almost the whole of Spain, the Christians, rather than submit to the yoke of infidels, fled and concealed themselves in this country, in Biscay, and in the Asturies, whither the valiant Don Pelagio retired: fugitives, and dispersed in small numbers, they lived in mountains and woods, some lurked in caves, and others contrived many subterranean abodes, of which number this is one. Having afterwards been so lucky as to drive their enemies out of Spain, they returned into the towns; and, since that time, their retreats have served for asylums to people of our profession. 'Tis true, indeed, the holy brotherhood * have discovered and destroyed some of them; but there are still plenty remaining; and (thank heaven) I have lived here in safety near fifteen years: my name is Captain

* The holy brotherhood in Spain, called Santa Hermandad, was formerly an association to suppress robbers in times of civil commotion; and at this day is an establishment kept up through all the kingdoms and provinces of Spain, for the same purpose.

Rolando: I am the chief of the company, and I a whom thou sawest with me is one of my gang."

CHAPTER V.

Signor Rolando had scarce done speaking, when six new faces appeared in the hall; these were the lieutenant with five of the company, who returned loaded with booty, which consisted of two hampers full of sugar, cinnamon, pepper, dried figs, almonds, and raisins; the lieutenant, addressing himself to the captain, told him, that he had taken these hampers from a grocer of Benavento, whose mule he had also carried off. When he had given an account of his expedition to his superior, the pillage of the grocer was ordered into the store, and it was unanimously agreed to make merry. A table being covered in the great hall, I was sent back into the kitchen, where dame Leonarda instructed me in the nature of my office; and, yielding to necessity, (since my cruel fate had so ordained) I suppressed my sorrow, and prepared myself for the service of those worthy gentlemen.

My first essay was on the side-board, which I adorned with silver cups, and many stone-bottles of that good wine which Signor Rolando had praised so much. I afterwards brought in two ragouts, which were no sooner served, than the whole company sat down to eat. They began with a good appetite, while I stood behind, ready to supply them with wine; and acquitted myself so handsomely, that I had the honour to be complimented upon my behaviour. The captain recounted my story in a few words. which afforded a good deal of diversion, and afterwards observed that I did

not want merit: but I was at that time cured of my vanity, and could hear myself praised without danger. Not one of them was silent on the subject; they said I seemed born to be their cup-bearer; that I was worth an hundred of my predecessor; and although dame Leonarda (since his death) had been honoured with the office of presenting nectar to those infernal gods, they deprived her of that glorious employment, with which they invested me, like a young Ganymede succeeding an ancient Hebe.

A great dish of roast meat, served up after the ragouts, finished the repast of those gormandizing thieves, who drinking in proportion to their gluttony, soon became frolicksome, made a hellish noise, and spoke all together: one began a story, another broke a jest, a third shouted, a fourth sung: so that there was nothing but riot and confusion! At length Rolando, tired of a scene in which he was so little regarded, called (with a voice that silenced the whole company) "Gentlemen, I have a proposal to make: instead of stunning one another in this manner, by speaking all together, would it not be better to entertain ourselves like reasonable creatures? There is a thought come into my head: since the time of our association, we have never had the curiosity to know what families we are derived from, and by what train of adventures we have been severally led to embrace this way of life: as these things seem worthy to be known, let us, for our diversion, communicate them to one another." The lieutenant, and the rest, as if they had something very entertaining to relate, embraced, with great demonstrations of joy, the proposal of their chief, who began his own history in these words.

"Gentlemen, you must know that I am the only son of a rich citizen of Madrid; the day of my birth was celebrated in the family by vast rejoicings; my father, pretty well stricken in years, was ravished

at sight of an heir, and my mother undertook to suckle me at her own breasts: her father, who was still alive, was a good old man, who meddled with nothing but his beads, and recounted his own warlike exploits, having been many years in the army; so that becoming insensibly the idol of these three persons, I was incessantly dandled in their arms. Lest study should fatigue me in my tender years, I was allowed to spend them in the most childish amusements; my father observing that children ought not to apply seriously to any thing, until time should have ripened the understanding. In expectation of this maturity, I neither learned to read nor write, but nevertheless, made good use of my time: for my father taught me a thousand different games: I became perfectly acquainted with cards, was no stranger to dice; and my grandfather filled my head with romantic stories of the military expeditions in which he had been concerned. He sung the same catches over and over, and when I had got ten or twelve lines by heart, by dint of hearing them repeated for three months together, my memory became a subject for admiration to my parents, who seemed no less satisfied with my genius. When profiting by the liberty I enjoyed of speaking what came uppermost, I used to interrupt their discourse with my nonsensical prattle—"Ah! what a charming creature it is!" (would my father cry, looking at me with inexpressible delight) while my mamma overwhelmed me with caresses, and my old grandsire wept with joy. I committed, in their presence, the most indecent actions with impunity: every thing was forgiven; and in short, they adored me. In the mean time, having attained my twelfth year, without being put to school, a master was at length provided: but he received precise orders to instruct me without using any violence, being only permitted to threaten me sometimes, with a view of inspiring me with awe. This permission had not the most salutary effects upon

me, who either laughed at his menaces, or, with tears in my eyes, went and complained to my mother and grand-papa of his barbarity. It was in vain for the poor devil to deny the accusation: he was looked upon as a tyrant, and my assertion always believed, in spite of his remonstrance. I happened one day to scratch myself, upon which, setting up my pipes, as if he had flayed me, my mother came running in, and turned my master out of doors, though he pro ested and took heaven to witness, that he had never touched my skin.

In the same manner I got rid of all my preceptors, until such an one as I wanted presented himself; this was a bachelor of Alcala: an excellent tutor for a person of fashion's child! he was a lover of play, women, and wine, consequently the fittest person in the world for me. The first thing he set about was to gain my affection, in which he succeeded, and by these means, gained the love of my parents, who left me entirely to his management: indeed they had no cause to repent of their confidence; for, in a very little time he made me perfect in the knowledge of the world: by dint of carrying me along with him to the places he frequented, I imbibed his taste so well, that, except in Latin I became an universal proficient; and when I found I had no further occasion for his instructions, he went to offer them elsewhere.

If during my childhood I had lived pretty freely, it was quite another thing when I became master of my own actions: I every moment ridiculed my parents, who did nothing but laugh at my sallies, which were the more agreeable, the more insolence they contained. Mean while I committed all kinds of debauchery, in the company of other young men of the same disposition; and as our parents did not supply us with money sufficient to support such a delicious life, every one pilfered what he could, at his own home; but that being also insufficient, we began to rob in the dark; when, unfortunately, the

corregidor got notice of us, and would have caused us to be apprehended, had we not been informed of his treacherous design. Upon which we consulted our safety in flight, and transferred the scene of our exploits to the highway. Since which time, gentlemen, God has given me grace to grow old in my profession, in spite of the dangers to which it is exposed."

Here the captain left off speaking, and the lieutenant, taking his turn, began with, "Gentlemen, an education quite opposite to that of Signor Rolando has, nevertheless, produced the same effect. My father was a butcher of Toledo, reckoned the greatest brute in the whole city, and my mother's disposition not much more gentle. While I was a child, they whipped me, as if it had been through emulation, at the rate of a thousand stripes a day: the least fault I committed was attended with the most severe chastisement; and it was in vain for me to ask pardon, with tears in my eyes, and protest that I was sorry for what I had done; far from being forgiven, I was often punished without a cause; while my father belaboured me, my mother (as if he had not exerted himself) instead of interceding for her child, frequently came to his assistance. This treatment inspired me with such aversion for my paternal habitation, that I ran away before I had attained my fourteenth year, and taking the road of Arragon, went to Saragossa, subsisting on charity by the way. There I consorted with beggars, who led a pretty comfortable life; they taught me to counterfeit blindness, to appear lame, and afflict my limbs with fictitious ulcers, &c. In the morning (like players, who disguise themselves in order to appear upon the stage) we prepared ourselves for the different parts we intended to act, and every one ran to his post: in the evening we met again, and enjoyed ourselves all night at the expence of those who had compassion on us in the day. Tired however of living

among those wretches, and ambitious of appearing in a higher sphere, I associated myself with some knights of the post, who taught me a great many stratagems; but we were, in a very short time, obliged to quit Saragossa, having quarrelled with a certain justice, whose protection we had enjoyed. Every one took his own course: for my own part, I engaged myself in a company of brave fellows who put travellers under contribution, and liked their manner of living so well, that hitherto, I have never felt the least inclination to seek another: I am therefore, gentlemen, very much obliged to the barbarity of my parents; for, had they treated me a little less savagely, instead of being an honourable lieutenant, I should have been doubtless at this day a miserable butcher."

The next that spoke was a young thief, who, sitting between the captain and lieutenant, said, "Gentlemen, the stories we have heard, are neither so complicated, nor so curious as mine: I owe my being to a peasant's wife, who lived in the neighbourhood of Seville: three weeks after she had brought me into the world (being still young, handsome, and healthy) it was proposed to her, to nurse a man of quality's only son lately born in Seville: this proposal my mother cheerfully accepted, and went to fetch the child, which being committed to her care, she no sooner brought it home to her house, than perceiving some small resemblance between us, she was tempted to make me pass for the infant of quality, in hopes that she should one day be well rewarded by me, for that kind office: my father, who was not more scrupulous than his neighbours, approved of the deceit; so that after having made us exchange our swaddling-clothes, the son of Don Rodrigo de Herrera was sent to another nurse under my name, and my mother suckled me under his.

"Notwithstanding all the fine things that are said of instinct and the force of blood, the little gentleman's parents swallowed the change with great

ease. they had not the least suspicion of the trick that was played upon them; for, till I was seven years old, I was scarce ever out of their arms. Their intention being to make me a complete cavalier, all sorts of masters were provided; but I had no great inclination for the exercises I learned; and still less relish for the sciences they explained: I loved much better to game with the servants, for whose company I frequented the kitchen and stable; but play was not long my predominant passion; for before I was seventeen years of age, I got drunk daily, seduced all the women in the house, but attached myself chiefly to the cookmaid, who seemed to merit my principal regard: she was a fat jolly wench, whose pleasantry and sleekness pleased me much; and I made love to her with so little circumspection, that Don Rodrigo himself perceived it. He reprimanded me sharply, reproached me with the baseness of my inclinations, and, lest the sight of this amiable object should render his remonstrances ineffectual, turned my princess out of doors.

"I was disgusted at this piece of conduct, for which I resolved to be revenged: with this view, I stole his lady's jewels, and running in quest of my fair Helen, who had retired to the house of a washerwoman of her acquaintance, I carried her off, at noon-day, to the end that nobody might be ignorant of my passion. That was not all: I conducted her into her own country, where I married her in a solemn manner, that I might not only give Herrera the more vexation, but also afford such a worthy example to the children of noblemen. Three months after my marriage, I was informed of Don Rodrigo's death; a piece of news I did not receive with indifference; but repairing instantly to Seville, in order to demand his estate, I found things strangely altered! My mother, who was dead, had been silly enough, on her death bed, to confess the whole affair, in presence of the curate

of the village, and other credible witnesses; in consequence of which, the true son of Don Rodrigo was already in possession of my place or rather of his own; and had been received with the more joy, on account of their being dissatisfied with me. Wherefore, having nothing to expect from that quarter, and no longer feeling inclination for my fat spouse, I joined some gentlemen of the road, with whom I began my expeditions."

The young robber having ended his story, another informed us, "That he was the son of a merchant at Burgos, and, prompted by an indiscreet devotion, had taken the habit and professed a very austere order, from which, in a few years, he apostatized." In short, these eight highwaymen spoke in their turns, and when I had heard them all, I was not at all surprised to find them together. The discourse was afterwards changed; they brought upon the carpet several projects for the next excursion: and after having come to a determination, got up from table, in order to go to rest. Having lighted their wax candles, and withdrawn, I followed captain Rolando into his chamber, where while I helped to undress him, "Well, Gil Blas (said he) thou seest how we live: we are always merry, and hatred and envy never get footing among us: we never have the least quarrel with one another, but are more united than a convent of monks: thou wilt, my child (pursued he) lead a very agreeable life in this place; for I don't believe thee fool enough to boggle at living with robbers: eh! dost thou think there are any honester people in the world than we? no, my lad, every one loves to prey upon his fellows; it is an universal principle, though variously exerted: conquerors (for example) seize upon the territories of their neighbours; people of quality borrow without any intention of repaying; bankers, treasurers, exchange-brokers, clerks, and all kinds of merchants, great and small, are not a whit more conscientious. As for your

limbs of the law, I need not mention them; every body knows what they can do: I must own, however, that they are somewhat more humane than we; for we often put innocent people to death, and they sometimes save the lives of the guilty."

CHAPTER VI.

When the captain of the thieves had made his apology for his profession, he went to bed, and I returned into the hall, where I uncovered the table, and put every thing in order; from thence I went into the kitchen, where Domingo (so was the old negro called) expected me to supper. Though I had no appetite, I sat down with them; but as I could not eat, and appeared as melancholy as I had cause to be so, these two apparitions, equally qualified, undertook to give me consolation: "Why do you afflict yourself, child? (said the old lady:) You ought rather to rejoice at your good fortune. —You are young, and seem to be of an easy temper; consequently would have been, in a little time, lost in the world: there you would have fallen into the hands of libertines, who would have engaged you in all manner of debauchery: whereas here your innocence finds a secure haven."—"Dame Leonarda is in the right (said the old black-a-moor with great gravity) and let me add, the world is full of affliction: thank heaven, therefore, my friend, for having delivered thee all at once from the dangers, difficulties, and misery of life."

I bore their discourse with patience, because to fret myself would have done me no service: at last Domingo, having eaten and drank plentifully, retired into the stable; while Leonarda, with a lamp

in her hand, conducted me into a vault, which served as a burying-place to the robbers who died a natural death, and in which I perceived a miserable truck-bed, that looked more like a tomb than a couch: "Here is your bedchamber (said she;) the lad, whose place you have the good fortune to supply, slept here as long as he lived among us; and now that he is dead rests in the same place — He slipt away in the flower of his age: I hope you will not be so simple as to follow his example." So saying, she put the light into my hand, and returned into her kitchen; while I, setting the lamp upon the ground, threw myself upon the bed, not so much in expectation of enjoying the least repose, as with a view to indulge my melancholy reflection. "O heavens (cried I,) was ever destiny so terrible as mine! I am banished from the sight of the sun; and, as if it was not enough to be buried alive at the age of eighteen, I am moreover condemned to serve thieves, to spend the day among highwaymen, and the night among the dead!" I wept bitterly over these suggestions, which seemed to me—and were in effect, extremely shocking. A thousand times I cursed my uncle's design of sending me to Salamanca: I repented of my flying from justice at Cacabelos, and even wished I had submitted to the torture.—But recollecting that I consumed myself in vain complaints, to no purpose, I began to think of some means by which I might escape. "What! (said I to myself) is it then impossible to deliver myself! the thieves are asleep, the cook-maid and negro will be in the same condition presently: can't I, while they are all quiet, by the help of my lamp, find out the passage through which I descended to this infernal abode? 'Tis true, indeed, I don't think myself strong enough to lift the trap-door that covers the entry; but however, that I may have nothing to reproach myself with, I will try: my despair will, perhaps

supply me with strength, and who knows but I may accomplish it?"

Having then projected this great design, I got up when I imagined Leonarda and Domingo were at rest; and taking the lamp in my hand, went out of the vault, recommending myself to the saints in heaven.—It was not without great difficulty that I found again all the windings of this new labyrinth, and arrived at the door of the stable; where at last, perceiving the passage I was in search of, I went into it, advancing towards the trap with as much nimbleness as joy:—but, alas! in the middle of the entry I met with a cursed iron grate, fast locked, and consisting of strong bars so close to one another, that I could scare thrust my hand between them. I was confounded at the sight of this new obstacle, which I had not observed when I came in, the grate being then open: I did not fail, however, to feel the bars and examine the lock, which I even attempted to force; when, all of a sudden, I felt a-cross my shoulders five or six hearty thwacks with a bull's pizzle! upon which I uttered such a dreadful yell, that the whole cavern echoed with the sound; and looking behind me, perceived the old negro in his shirt, with a dark lantern in one hand, and the instrument of his execution in the other. "Ah ha! Mr. Jackanapes (said he) you want to make your escape, hah? You must not imagine that I am to be caught napping.—I heard you all the while.—I suppose you thought the grate was open, didn't you? Know, my boy, that henceforth thou shalt always find it shut; and that when we detain any body here, against his inclination, he must be more cunning than thou, if he ever gets off."

In the mean time two or three of the thieves, starting out of their sleep at the noise of my cries, and believing that the holy brotherhood was coming souse upon them, got up in a hurry and alarm-

ed their companions. In an instant all were a-foot, and, seizing their swords and carabines, advanced half naked to the place where Domingo chastised me; but they no sooner understood the cause of the noise they had heard, than their uneasiness was changed into fits of laughter.—"How, Gil Blas (said the apostate thief to me) thou hast not been here six hours, and want'st to take thy leave of us already! sure thou must have a great aversion to a retired life, hah? What would'st thou do if thou wert a Carthusian friar? Go to bed; thou art quit for once, on account of the stripes Domingo has bestowed on thee; but if ever thou should'st make another effort to escape, by St. Bartholomew! we will flay thee alive." This said, he withdrew; the other thieves retired into their apartments; the old negro, proud of his exploit, returned into his stable, and I sneaked back to my Golgotha, where I spent the remaining part of the night in sighs and tears.

CHAPTER VII.

During the first days of my captivity I was like to sink under the sorrow that oppressed me, and might have been said to die by inches; but at last my good genius inspired me with a resolution to dissemble: I affected to appear less sad than usual: I began to laugh and sing, though, God knows, with an aching heart. In a word I counterfeited so well, that Leonarda and Domingo were deceived, and believed that the bird was at last reconciled to his cage.—The robbers were of the same opinion; for I assumed a gay air when I filled wine for them, and mingled in their conversation, whenever I found an opportunity of act-

ing the buffoon. This freedom, far from displeasing, afforded them diversion. "Gil Blas (said the captain to me one evening, while I entertained them in this manner) thou hast done well, my lad, to banish thy melancholy: I am charmed with thy wit and humour: I find people are not known all at once; for I did not think thou hadst been so sprightly and good-natured."

The rest joined also in my praise, and appeared so well satisfied with me, that, taking the advantage of this good disposition, "Gentlemen, (said I) allow me to tell my mind: since my abode in this place I find myself quite another sort of a person than heretofore. You have divested me of the prejudices of education, and I insensibly imbibe your disposition: I have a taste for your profession, and a longing desire of being honoured with the name of your companion, and of sharing the dangers of your expeditions." All the company approved of my discourse, and commended my forwardness; so that it was unanimously resolved to let me serve a little longer, in order to approve myself worthy, then carry me out in their excursions; after which I should obtain the honourable place I demanded.

Well, then, I was obliged to persist in my dissimulation, and exercise the post of cup-bearer still; a circumstance that mortified me extremely: for my design in aspiring to the honour of becoming a thief, was only to have the liberty of taking the air with the rest, in hopes that one day I should be able to escape from them, in the course of their expeditions. This hope alone supported my life; but nevertheless appeared so distant, that I tried more than once to baffle the vigilance of Domingo; though it was never in my power, he being always so much upon his guard, that I would have defied an hundred Orpheus's to charm such a Cerberus. 'Tis true, indeed, I did not do all that I could have done to beguile him, lest I should have

awakened his suspicion; for he had a hawk's eye over me, and I was obliged to act with the utmost circumspection, that I might not betray myself. I therefore resigned myself to my fate, until the time should be expired that was prescribed by the robbers for receiving me into their gang; and this event I expected as impatiently as if I had been to be enrolled in a list of commissioners.

Heaven be praised! in six months that time arrived; when Signor Rolando, addressing himself to his company said, "Gentlemen, we must keep our words with Gil Blas: I have no bad opinion of that young fellow, and I hope we shall make something of him: it is therefore my opinion, that we carry him along with us to-morrow to gather laurels on the highway, and usher him into the path of glory." The robbers agreed to their captain's proposal; and to show that they already looked upon me as one of their companions, from that moment dispensed with my service, and re-established dame Leonarda in the office she had lost on my account. They made me throw away my habit, which consisted of a sorry threadbare short cassock, and dressed me in the spoils of a gentleman whom they had lately robbed; after which I prepared for my first campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was in the month of September, when towards the close of the night, I came out of the cavern in company with the robbers, armed like them, with a carabine, two pistols, sword, and bayonet, and mounted on a pretty good horse, which they had taken from the same gentleman whose dress I wore.

I had lived so long in darkness, that when day broke, I was dazzled with the light, which however soon became familiar to my eyes.

Having passed hard by Ponferrada, we lay in ambush in a small wood which bordered on the road to Leon. There we waited, expecting that fortune would throw some good luck in our way, when we perceived a Dominican (contrary to the custom of these good fathers) riding upon a sorry mule: "God be praised, (cried the captain laughing) there's the coup d'essai of Gil Blas:—let him go and unload that monk, while we observe his behaviour."—All the rest were of opinion that this was a very proper commission for me, and exhorted me to acquit myself handsomely in it. "Gentlemen, (said I) you shall be satisfied: I will make that priest as bare as my hand, and bring hither his mule in a twinkling."—"No, no, (replied Rolando) she is not worth the trouble: bring us only the purse of his reverence; that is all we expect of thee." For this purpose I sallied from the wood, and made towards the clergyman, begging heaven all the way to pardon the action I was about to commit. I would gladly have made my escape that moment; but the greatest part of the thieves were better mounted than I, and, had they perceived me running away, would have been at my heels in an instant, and entrapped me again in a very short time, or perhaps discharged their carabines at me, in which case I should have had nothing to brag of.—Not daring therefore to hazard such a delicate step, I came up with the priest, and clapping a pistol to his breast demanded his purse. He stopped short to survey me, and without seeming much afraid, "Child (said he) you are very young:—you have got a bad trade by the hand, betimes."—"Bad as it is, father (I replied) I wish I had begun it sooner."—"Ah! son, son, (said the good friar, who did not comprehend the true meaning of my words) what blindness!—allow me to re-

present to you the miserable condition "—"O father (said I, interrupting him hastily) a truce with your morals, if you please: my business on the highway is not to hear sermons; I want money."—"Money! (cried he, with an air of astonishment) you are little acquainted with the charity of the Spaniards, if you think people of my cloth have occasion for money while they travel in this kingdom. Undeceive yourself—we are every where chearfully received, have lodging and victuals, and nothing is asked in return for our prayers: in short, we never carry money about us on the road; but confide altogether in Providence." "That won't go down with me (I replied): your dependance is not altogether so visionary; for you have always some good pistoles in reserve, to make more sure of Providence. But, my good father (added I) let us ha' done: my comrades, who are in that wood, begin to be impatient; therefore throw your purse upon the ground instantly, or I shall certainly put you to death."

At these words, which I uttered with a menacing look, the friar, seeming afraid of his life, said, "Hold! I will satisfy you then, since there is a necessity for it:—I see tropes and figures have no effect on people of your profession." So saying, he pulled from underneath his gown a large purse of shamoy leather, which he dropped upon the ground. Then I told him he might continue his journey; a permission he did not give me the trouble of repeating; but clapped his heels to the sides of his mule, which belying the opinion I had conceived of her (for I imagined she was not much better than my uncle's) all of a sudden went off at a pretty round pace. As soon as he was at a distance I alighted, and taking up the purse, which seemed heavy, mounted again, and got back to the wood in a trice, where the thieves waited with impatience to congratulate me upon my victory —

Scarce would they give me time to dismount, so eager were they to embrace me; "Courage, Gil Blas! (said Rolando) thou hast done wonders.—I have had my eyes on thee during thy expedition: I have observed thy countenance all the time, and I prophecy that thou wilt in time become an excellent highwayman." The lieutenant and the rest approved the prediction, which they assured me I should one day certainly fulfil. I thanked them for the high idea they had conceived of me, and promised to do all that lay in my power to maintain it.

After they had loaded me with so much undeserved praise, they were desirous of examining the booty I had made. "Come, (said they) let us see what there is in the clergyman's purse."—"It ought to be well furnished (continued one among them) for those good fathers don't travel like pilgrims." The captain untied the purse, and, opening it, pulled out two or three handfuls of copper medals, mixed with bits of hallowed wax, and some scapularies.* At the sight of such an uncommon prey, all the robbers burst out into immoderate fits of laughter. "Upon my soul (cried the lieutenant) we are very much obliged to Gil Blas for having, in his coup d'essai, performed a theft so salutary to the company." This piece of wit brought on more. Those miscreants, and he in particular who had apostatized, began to be very merry upon the matter: a thousand sallies escaped them, that too well denoted their immorality.—I was the only person that did not laugh, my mirth being checked by the railers, who enjoyed themselves at my expense. Every one having shot his bolt, the captain said to me, "In faith, Gil Blas, I advise thee as a

* Scapularies are pieces of consecrated stuff, worn by priests and nuns.

friend to joke no more with monks, who are, generally speaking, too arch and cunning for such as thee."

CHAPTER IX.

WE remained in the wood the greatest part of the day, without perceiving any traveller that could make amends for the priest. At last we left it, in order to return to our cavern, confining our exploits to that ludicrous event, which still constituted the subject of our discourse, when we discovered at a distance a coach drawn by four mules, advancing at a brisk trot, and escorted by three men on horseback, who seemed well armed. Upon this Rolando ordered his troop to halt, and held a council; the result of which was, that they should attack the coach. We were immediately arranged according to his disposition, and marched up to it in order of battle.—In spite of the applause I had acquired in the wood, I felt myself seized with an universal tremor, and immediately a cold sweat broke out all over my body, which I looked upon as no very favourable omen.—To crown my good luck I was in the front of the line, between the captain and lieutenant, who had stationed me there, that I might accustom myself to stand fire all at once. Rolando observing how much nature suffered within me, looked at me askance, saying, with a fierce countenance, "Hark'ee, Gil Blas, remember to do thy duty; for if thou hang'st an arse, I'll blow thy brains out." I was too well persuaded that he would keep his word to neglect this caution; for which reason I thought of nothing now but of recommending my soul to God.

In the mean time the coach and horsemen ap-

proached, who knowing what sort of people we were, and guessing our design by our appearance, stopped within musket-shot, and prepared to receive us; while a gentleman of a good mien, and richly dressed, came out of the coach, and mounting a horse that was led by one of his attendants, put himself at their head, without any other arms than a sword and a pair of pistols.—Though they were but four against nine (the coachman remaining on the seat) they advanced towards us with a boldness that redoubled my fear; I did not fail, however, though I trembled in every joint, to make ready to fire; but, to tell the truth I shut my eyes, and turned away my head, when I discharged my carabine; and, considering the manner in which it went off, my conscience ought to be acquitted on that score.

I will not pretend to describe the action; for although I was present I saw nothing, and my fear, in confounding my imagination, concealed from me the horror of the spectacle that occasioned it.—All I know of the matter is, that after a great noise of firing, I heard my companions shout, and cry victory! victory! at that acclamation, the terror, which had taken possession of my senses, dissipated, and I saw the four horsemen stretched lifeless on the field of battle. On our side we had but one man killed, and he was no other than the apostate, who had met with his deserts for his apostacy and profane jests upon the scapularies. The lieutenant received a wound in the arm; but it was a very slight one, the shot having only ruffled his skin.

Signor Rolando ran immediately to the door of the coach, in which there was a lady of about four or five and twenty years of age, who appeared very handsome notwithstanding the melancholy condition in which she was, for she had swooned during the engagement, and was not yet recovered. While he was busied in looking after her, we took care of

the booty, beginning with securing the horses of the killed, which, frightened at the noise of the firing, had ran away, after having lost their riders. As for the mules they had not stirred, although the coachman (during the action) had quitted his place, in order to make his escape.—We alighted, and, unyoking, loaded them with some trunks we found fastened to the coach, before and behind. This being done, the lady, who had not as yet recovered her senses, was (by order of the captain) taken out and placed on horseback before one of the robbers that was best mounted; after which, quitting the high road, the coach and the dead, whom we had stripped, we carried off the lady, the mules, and the horses.

CHAPTER X.

It was within an hour of day-break when we arrived at our habitation; and the first thing we did was to lead our beasts into the stable, where we were obliged to tie them to the rack, and take care of them with our own hands, the old negro having been (three days before) seized with a violent fit of the gout and rheumatism, that kept him a-bed, deprived of the use of all his limbs: the only member at liberty was his tongue, which he employed in testifying his impatience, by the most horrible execrations. Leaving this miserable wretch to swear and blaspheme, we went to the kitchen, where our whole attention was engrossed by the lady, and we succeeded so well as to bring her out of her fit: but when she had recovered the use of her senses, and saw herself in the hands of several men whom she did not know, she perceived her

misfortune, and was seized with horror! The most lively sorrow and direful despair appeared in her eyes, which she lifted up to heaven as if to reproach it with the indignities that threatened her: then giving way of a sudden to those dismal apprehensions, she relapsed into a swoon, her eye-lids closed, and the robbers imagined that death would deprive them of their prey.—The captain, thinking it more proper to leave her to herself than to torment her with their assistance, ordered her to be carried to Leonarda's bed, where she was left alone, at the hazard of what might happen.

We repaired to the hall, where one of the thieves, who had been bred a surgeon, dressed the lieutenant's wound: after which, being desirous of seeing what was in the trunks, we found some of them filled with lace and linen, others with clothes, and the last we opened contained some bags full of pistoles; at sight of which the gentlemen concerned were infinitely rejoiced. This enquiry being made, the cook-maid furnished the side-board, laid the cloth, and served up supper.—Our conversation at first turned upon the great victory we had obtained; and Rolando addressing himself to me, "Confess, Gil Blas (said he) confess that thou wast horribly afraid." I ingenuously owned, that what he said was very true; but that when I should have made two or three campaigns, I would fight like a knight-errant: whereupon the whole company took my part, observing that my fear was excusable; that the action had been very hot; and that, considering I was a young fellow who had never smelled gunpowder, I had acquitted myself pretty well.

The discourse afterwards falling upon the mules and horses we had brought into our retreat, it was agreed, that to-morrow before day we should all set out together, in order to sell them at Mansilla, which place, in all probability, the report of our expedition had not yet reached. This resolution being taken, we finished our meal, and returned

into the kitchen to visit the lady, whom we found still in the same situation.—Nevertheless, though it was with difficulty we could perceive any signs of life in her, some of the villains did not scruple to regard her with a profane eye, and even to discover a brutal desire, which they would have satisfied immediately, had not Rolando prevented it, representing to them, that they ought at least to wait until the lady should get the better of that oppression of sorrow which deprived her of reflection.—The respect they had for their captain restrained their incontinence, otherwise nothing could have saved the lady, whose honour death itself, perhaps, would not have been able to secure.

We left this unfortunate gentlewoman in the same condition in which we found her, Rolando contenting himself with laying injunctions on Leonarda to take care of her, while every one retired into his own apartment. For my own part, as soon as I got to bed, instead of resigning myself to sleep, I did nothing but think of this lady's misfortune: I never doubted that she was a person of quality, and looked upon her situation as the more deplorable for that reason.—I could not without shuddering represent to myself the horrors to which she was destined, and felt myself as deeply concerned for her as if I had been attached by blood or friendship. At last, after having bewailed her hard fate, I began to revolve the means of rescuing her honour from the danger in which it was, and of delivering myself at the same time from the subterranean abode.—I recollected that the old negro was not in a condition to move, and that, since his being taken ill, the cook-wench kept the key of the grate.—This reflection warmed my imagination, and made me conceive a scheme, which I digested so well, that I proceeded to put it in practice immediately, in the following manner.

Pretending to be racked with the colick, I began with complaints and groans; then raising my voice,

uttered dreadful cries, that waked the robbers, and brought them instantly to my bed-side. When they asked what made me roar so hideously, I answered that I was tortured with an horrible colick; and, the better to persuade them of the truth of what I said, grinded my teeth, made frightful grimaces and contortions, and writhed myself in a strange manner: then I became quiet all of a sudden as if my pains had given me some respite.—In a moment after, I began again to bounce about the bed, and twist about my limbs: in a word, I played my part so well, that the thieves, cunning as they were, allowed themselves to be deceived, and believed in good earnest that I was violently griped. In a moment all of them were busied in endeavours to ease me; one brought a bottle of usquebaugh, and made me swallow one half of it: another, in spite of my teeth, injected a clyster of oil of sweet almonds; a third warmed a napkin, and applied it broiling hot to my belly.—I roared for mercy in vain: they imputed my cries to the colick, and continued to make me suffer real pains, in attempting to free me from one I did not feel. At last being able to resist them no longer, I was fain to tell them that the gripes had left me, and to conjure them to give me quarter. Upon which they left off tormenting me with their remedies, and I took care to trouble them no more with my complaints, for fear of undergoing their good offices a second time.

This scene lasted almost three hours, after which the robbers, judging that day was not far off, prepared themselves to set out for Mansilla: I would have got up, to make them believe I was very desirous of accompanying them; but they would not suffer me to rise, Signor Rolando saying, "No, no, Gil Blas, stay at home, child; thy colick may return—thou shalt go with us another time; but thou art in no condition to go abroad to day." I was afraid of insisting upon it too much, lest he

should yield to my request; therefore I only appeared very much mortified, because I could not be of the party. This I acted so naturally, that they went out of the cavern without the least suspicion of my design.—After their departure, which I had endeavoured to hasten by my prayers, I said to myself, "Now Gil Blas! now is the time for thee to have resolution: arm thyself with courage, to finish that which thou hast so happily begun.—Domingo is not in a condition to oppose thy enterprise, and Leonarda cannot hinder its execution.—Seize this opportunity of escaping, than which, perhaps, thou wilt never find one more favourable." These suggestions filled me with confidence; I got up, took my sword and pistols, and went towards the kitchen; but before I entered, hearing Leonarda speaking, stopped, in order to listen. She was talking to the unknown lady, who, having recovered her senses, and understood the whole of her misfortune, wept, in the utmost bitterness of despair.—"Weep, my child (said the old beldam to her) dissolve yourself into tears, and don't spare for sighs; for that will give you ease.—You have had a dangerous qualm: but now, there is nothing to fear, since you shed abundance of tears.—Your grief will abate by little and little, and you will soon accustom yourself to live with our gentlemen, who are men of honour.—You will be treated like a princess, meet with nothing but complaisance, and fresh proofs of affection every day.—There are a great many women who would be glad to be in your place."

I did not give Leonarda time to proceed, but entering clapped a pistol to her breast, and, with a threatening look commanded her to surrender the key of the grate. She was confounded at my behaviour, and, though almost at the end of her career, so much attached to life, that she durst not refuse my demand. Having got the key in my possession, I addressed myself to the afflicted lady

saying, "Madam, heaven has sent you a deliverer; rise and follow me, and I will conduct you whither soever you shall please to direct." The lady did not remain deaf to my words, which made such an impression upon her, that summoning up all the strength she had left, she got up, and throwing herself at my feet, conjured me to preserve her honour. I raised her and assured her, that she might rely upon me; then taking some cords, which I perceived in the kitchen, with her assistance, I tied Leonarda to the feet of a large table, swearing that if she opened her mouth, I would kill her on the spot. I afterwards lighted a flambeau, and going with the stranger into the room where the gold and silver was deposited, filled my pockets with pistoles and double pistoles; and to induce the lady to follow my example, assured her, that she only took back her own. When we had made a good provision of this kind, we went towards the stable, which I entered alone with my pistols cocked, firmly believing that the old negro, in spite of his gout and rheumatism, would not suffer me to saddle and bridle my horse in quiet; and fully resolved to cure him of all his distempers, if he should take it in his head to be troublesome: but, by good luck he was so overwhelmed with the pains he had undergone, and those he still suffered, that I brought my horse out of the stable, even without his seeming to perceive it; and the lady waiting for me at the door, we threaded with all dispatch the passage that led out of the cavern, arrived at the grate, which we opened, and at last came to the trap-door, which we lifted up with great difficulty, or rather the desire of escaping lent us new strength, without which we should not have been able to succeed.

Day began to appear just as we found ourselves delivered from the jaws of this abyss; and as we fervently desired to be at a greater distance from it, I threw myself into the saddle, the lady mounted



R. Smirke R.A. pinx.t C. Armstrong sculp.t

GIL BLAS. VOL. I.

THE ESCAPE OF GIL BLAS WITH DONNA MENCIA. | GIL BLAS S'ÉCHAPPE AVEC DONA MENCIA.

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behind me, and following the first path that presented itself, at a round gallop, got out of the forest in a short time, and entered a plain divided by several roads, one of which we took at random. I was mortally afraid that it would conduct us to Mansilla, where we might meet with Rolando and his confederates; but happily my fear was vain. We arrived at the town of Astorga, at two o'clock in the afternoon, where people gazed at us with extreme attention, as if it had been an extraordinary thing to see a woman on horseback, sitting behind a man. We alighted at the first inn we came to, where the first thing I did was to order a partridge and a young rabbit to the fire; and while this was doing, I conducted the lady into a chamber, where we began to converse with one another; for we had rode so fast, that we had no discourse upon the road. She shewed how sensible she was of the service I had done to her, and observed, that after I had performed such a generous action, she could not persuade herself that I was a companion of the thieves, from whom I had rescued her. I told her my story, in order to confirm the good opinion she had conceived of me; and, by that means engaged her to honour me with her confidence, and inform me of her misfortunes, which she recounted, as I shall relate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

I WAS born at Valladolid, and my name is Donna Mencia of Mosquera. Don Martin my father, after having spent almost his whole patrimony in the service of his king, was killed in Por-

tugal, at the head of his own regiment, and left me so moderately provided, that though I was an only child, I was far from being a good match. I did not want admirers, however, in spite of the lowness of my fortune: a good many of the most considerable cavaliers in Spain made their addresses to me; but he who attracted my attention most, was Don Alvaro de Mello: he was indeed more handsome than any of his rivals; but more substantial qualifications determined me in his favour; he was endued with prudence, probity, and valour, and withal the most gallant man in the world: when he gave entertainments, nothing could be more elegant, and when he appeared at tournaments, every body admired his vigour and address: I preferred him therefore to all others, and married him accordingly.

A few days after our marriage, he happened to meet with Don Andrea de Baesa, who had been one of his rivals, in a private place, where, quarrelling with each other, they came to blows, and Don Andrea lost his life in the rencounter. As he was nephew to the corregidor of Valladolid, a violent man, and mortal enemy to the family of Mello, Don Alvaro knew he could not leave the city too soon: he returned home in a hurry, and while they saddled his horse, told me what had happened.—"My dear Mencia (said he) we must part! you know the corregidor: don't let us then flatter ourselves, for he will prosecute me with the utmost rancour; and as you are not ignorant of his credit, you know I cannot be safe in this kingdom." He was so much penetrated with his own sorrow, and with that which he saw take possession of my breast, that he could say no more; and when I had prevailed upon him to furnish himself with some money and jewels, he clasped me in his arms, and, during a whole quarter of an hour, we did nothing but mingle our sighs and tears. At last, being told the horse was ready, he tore himself

from me; he departed and left me in a condition not to be described. Happy! had the excess of my affliction, at that time, put an end to my life! what troubles and sorrows would my death have prevented! Some hours after Don Alvaro was gone, the corregidor being informed of his flight, ordered him to be pursued, and spared nothing to have him in his power: but my husband always baffled his pursuit, and kept himself secure, in such a manner that the judge found himself obliged to limit his revenge to the sole satisfaction of ruining the fortune of a man, whose blood he wanted to shed; his efforts were not unsuccessful, all the effects of Don Alvaro being confiscated.

Left in the most afflicting situation, and having scarce wherewithal to subsist, I began to live a very solitary life, all my attendants being reduced to one maid: I spent the day in bemoaning, not an indigence, which I could have borne with patience; but the absence of my dear husband, whose condition I was utterly ignorant of, although he had promised, in his last melancholy adieu, that he would take care to inform me of his lot, into whatever part of the world his cruel fate should conduct him. Nevertheless, seven long years elapsed, without my hearing the least account of him; and this uncertainty of his destiny plunged me into an abyss of sorrow! At last I was told, that, in fighting for the king of Portugal in Fez, he had lost his life in battle: a man lately returned from Afric confirmed this report, assuring me, that he was perfectly well acquainted with Don Alvaro de Mello, had served with him in the Portuguese army, and even seen him fall in the action: to this he added many other circumstances, which persuaded me that my husband was no more.

At that time, Don Ambrosio Mesia Carrillo, Marquis of Guardia, came to Valladolid: he was one of those old lords, who, by the politeness and gallantry of their manners, make people forget their

age, and continue still agreeable to the ladies; one day hearing, by accident, the story of Don Alvaro; and being desirous of seeing me, on account of the picture which had been drawn of me: for the satisfaction of his curiosity, he engaged one of my relations, who carried me to her house. Seeing me there, I had the fortune to please him, in spite of the remarkable impression which grief had made on my countenance: but why do I say, in spite of it? perhaps he was touched alone by my sad and languishing air, which prepossessed him in favour of my fidelity: his love in all probability was the effect of my melancholy; for he told me more than once, that he looked upon me as a miracle of constancy; and that, for this reason, he even envied the fate of my husband, how deplorable soever it was in other respects; in a word, he was struck at sight of me, and had no occasion to see me a second time, in order to take the resolution of making me his wife.

He chose the intercession of my kinswoman, towards the obtaining of my consent: she came to my lodgings accordingly, and represented to me, that my husband having ended his days in the kingdom of Fez, as we had been informed, it was not reasonable that I should bury my charms any longer; that I had sufficiently bewailed the fate of a man, with whom I had been united but a few moments; and that I ought to profit by the occasion that now presented itself; by which means I ought to be the happiest woman in the world. Then she extolled the great family of the old Marquis, his vast estate, and unblemished character: but her eloquence in displaying the advantages he possessed was in vain; it was not in her power to persuade me; not that I doubted the death of Don Alvaro, or was restrained by the fear of seeing him again, when I should least expect him; the little inclination, or rather the reluctance, I felt for a second marriage, after having suffered so many

misfortunes by my first, was the only obstacle my relation had to remove. She did not despair for all that; on the contrary, it redoubled her zeal for Don Ambrosio; she engaged my whole family in the interests of that lord; my relations pressed me to accept of such an advantageous match, I was every moment besieged, importuned, and tormented; and my misery which daily increased, contributed not a little to overcome my resistance.

Being unable, therefore, to hold out any longer, I yielded to their pressing instances, and married the Marquis of Guardia, who, the day after our nuptials carried me to a very fine castle which he had, situated near Burgos, between Grajal and Rodillas. He conceived the most violent passion for me, and I observed in the whole of his behaviour, the utmost desire of pleasing me. His only study was to anticipate my wishes: no husband had ever such a tender regard for his wife; and no lover ever showed more complaisance to his mistress. I should have been passionately fond of Don Ambrosio, notwithstanding the disproportion of our years, had I been capable of loving any one after Don Alvaro, but a constant heart can never change. The endeavours of my second husband to please me were rendered ineffectual by the remembrance of my first; so that I could only requite his tenderness with pure sentiments of gratitude.

I was in this disposition, when, one day, taking the air at the window of my apartment, I perceived, in the garden, a kind of peasant, who earnestly looked at me: thinking he was the gardener's servant, I took no notice of him; but next day being again at the window, I saw him in the same place, and he seemed to view me with uncommon attention; struck with this circumstance, I looked at him, in my turn, and after having some time considered him, thought I recollected the features of the unfortunate Don Alvaro! This apparition raised an inconceivable tumult within me! I shrieked aloud;

but luckily, there was nobody present, except Inez, who, of all my servants, enjoyed the greatest share of my confidence. When I imparted to her the suspicion that alarmed me, she laughed at my apprehension, believing that my eyes were imposed upon by some slight resemblance.—"Recollect yourself, madam (said she) and don't imagine you have seen your former husband: what likelihood is there, that he should be here in the dress of a peasant? or, indeed, what probability is there of his being alive! I will go down into the garden (added she) and talk to this countryman, and when I have learned who he is, come back and let you know." Inez accordingly went into the garden, and soon after returned to my apartment in great emotion, saying, "Madam, your suspicion is but too just! it is Don Alvaro himself whom you have seen! He has discovered himself, and demands a secret interview."

As I had, at that very time, an opportunity of receiving Don Alvaro, the Marquis being at Burgos, I ordered my maid to bring him into my closet by a private stair-case. You may well think that I was in a terrible agitation, and altogether unable to support the presence of a man who had a right to load me with reproaches. As soon as he appeared, I fainted away. Inez and he flew to my assistance, and when they had brought me out of my swoon, Don Alvaro said, "Madam, for heaven's sake compose yourself; let not my presence be a punishment to you; I have no intention to give you the least pain; I come not as a furious husband, to call you to an account of your plighted troth, and upbraid you with the second engagement you have contracted: I know very well, that it was the work of your relations; I am acquainted with all the persecutions you have suffered on that score: besides, the report of my death was spread all over Valladolid; and you had the more reason to believe it true, as no letter from me assured

you of the contrary: in short, I know in what manner you have lived since our cruel separation, and that necessity, rather than love, has thrown you into the arms of—."—"Ah sir! (cried I, interrupting him) why will you excuse your unhappy wife! she is criminal since you live! Why am I not still in that miserable situation in which I lived, before I gave my hand to Don Ambrosio! Fatal nuptials! I should then, at least, have had the consolation in my misery, to see you again without a blush."

"My dear Mencia! (replied Don Alvaro, with a look that testified how much he was affected by my tears) I do not complain; and far from reproaching you with the splendid condition in which I find you, by all my hopes I thank heaven for it; since the melancholy day of my departure from Valladolid fate has been always adverse, and my life but a chain of misfortunes; and, to crown my misery, it never was in my power to let you hear from me! Too confident of your love, I incessantly represented to myself the condition to which my fatal tenderness had reduced you. My imagination painted Donna Mencia in her tears; you was the greatest of all my misfortunes, and sometimes, I must confess, I have looked upon myself as a criminal, in having had the good fortune to please you: I have wished that your affections had inclined towards some one of my rivals, since the preference you gave to me had cost you so dear. Nevertheless, after seven years of suffering, more in love than ever, I was resolved to see you. I could not resist this desire, which at the end of a long slavery, having an opportunity to satisfy I went in this disguise, to Valladolid, at the hazard of my life; there being informed of every thing, I came hither, and found means to introduce myself into the family of the gardener, who has hired me to work under him. You see in what manner I have conducted myself to obtain

this private interview; but do not imagine that my design is to disturb the felicity you enjoy, by remaining in this place. No! I love you more than myself; I have the utmost regard for your repose; and now that I have had the melancholy satisfaction of conversing with you, will go and finish, at a distance, that miserable life, which I sacrifice to your quiet."

"No, Don Alvaro! no! (cried I, at these words) I will not suffer you to leave me a second time! I will go along with you, and death alone shall divide us!"—"Take my advice (said he) and live with Don Ambrosio; do not associate yourself with my misfortunes, but leave me alone to support the weight of them." He said other things, to the same purpose; but the more he seemed willing to sacrifice himself to my happiness, I felt myself the less disposed to consent to it; and when he saw me firmly resolved to follow him, he changed his tone all of a sudden, and assuming a more serene air, said, "Madam, since you have still so much love for Don Alvaro, as to prefer his misery to the prosperity you now enjoy, let us go and live at Betancos, at the farther end of the kingdom of Gallicia, where I have a secret retreat. Although my misfortunes have ruined my estate, they have not yet deprived me of friends: I have still some faithful ones remaining, who have put me in a condition to carry you off: by their assistance I have provided a coach at Zamora, bought mules and horses, and am accompanied by three resolute Gallicians, armed with carabines and pistols, who now wait for my orders at the village of Rodillas. Let us therefore (added he) take the advantage of Don Ambrosio's absence: I will order the coach to come to the castle-gate, and we will set out instantly."—I consented: Don Alvaro flew to Rodillas, and returned in a short time, with his three attendants, to carry me off from the midst of my women, who not knowing what to think of this

event, ran all away in the utmost consternation: Inez alone was privy to it, but refused to attach her fortune to mine, because she was in love with the valet de chambre of Don Ambrosio.

I got into the coach with Don Alvaro, carrying nothing with me but my own clothes, and some jewels I had before my second marriage; for I would take nothing that the Marquis had given me, on that occasion. We took the road to Gallicia, without knowing if we should be so happy as to reach it, having reason to fear that Don Ambrosio, at his return, would pursue us with a great number of people and overtake us. Nevertheless, we continued our journey two days, without seeing one horseman behind us; and in hopes that the third would pass in the same manner, were conversing with each other in great tranquillity; Don Alvaro had just recounted the melancholy adventure which had given rise to the report of his death; and how, after having been a slave five years, he had recovered his liberty; when yesterday, on the road to Leon, we met those thieves, with whom you was in company: he is the person whom they murdered, with all his attendants, and for whom these my tears are shed.

CHAPTER XII.

Donna Mencia having ended her relation, shed a torrent of tears, while I, letting her give free vent to her sighs, wept also; so natural is it to interest one's self for the unfortunate, especially for a fine lady in distress. I was going to ask what she intended to do in the present conjuncture, and perhaps she was about to consult me on the same subject; when our conversation was in-

terrupted by a great noise in the inn, which, in spite of us, attracted our attention. This noise was occasioned by the arrival of the corregidor, followed by two alguazils * and a guard, who, without any ceremony, entered the room where we were. A gentleman who accompanied them approached me first, and examining my dress had no occasion to hesitate long, but cried, "By St. Jago! this is my individual doublet, as easy to be known again as my horse: you may apprehend this gallant on my testimony, he is one of the thieves who have an unknown retreat somewhere in this country."

At this discourse, by which I understood he was the gentleman who had been robbed, and whose spoils I was unluckily in possession of, I was surprized, confounded, and dismayed! the corregidor, whose office obliged him to put a bad construction on my disorder, rather than interpret it favourably, concluded that I was not accused without reason, and presuming that the lady might be an accomplice, ordered us to be imprisoned separately. This judge, far from being one of those who assume a stern countenance, was all softness and smiles; but God knows if he was a bit the better for that; for I was no sooner committed, than he came into the gaol with his two terriers, I mean the alguazils; who (not forgetting their laudable custom) began to rummage me in a moment. What a glorious windfall was this for those honest gentlemen! I do not believe that ever they got such a booty before: at every handful of pistoles they pulled out, I saw their eyes sparkle with joy; the corregidor, in particular, was transported! "Child (said he, with a voice full of meekness) we must do our duty, but be not afraid: if thou art innocent, thou shalt sustain

* Alguazils are attendants of justice, whose office resembles that of our bailiffs.

no harm." In the mean time, with all their gentleness, they emptied my pockets, and even robbed me of that which the thieves had respected, I mean my uncle's forty ducats: their greedy and indefatigable hands searched me from head to foot; they turned me about on all sides, and even stripped me to see if I had any money between my shirt and my skin. When they had dexterously acquitted themselves in this manner, I was interrogated by the corregidor, to whom I ingenuously recounted every thing that had happened to me. He ordered my deposition to be taken in writing, and then went away with his attendants and my coin, leaving me entirely naked among straw.

"O life! (cried I, when I found myself alone in this condition) how full of capricious accidents and disappointments art thou! Since I left Oviedo, I have met with nothing but misfortunes! Scarce had I got out of one danger, when I fell into another! and when I came into this town, I was far from thinking that I should so soon become acquainted with the corregidor." While I made these vain reflections, I put on again the cursed doublet and the rest of the dress which my evil genius had lent me; then exhorting myself to take courage, "Come, Gil Blas (said I to myself) show thy fortitude: it shall ill become thee to despair in an ordinary prison, after having put thy patience to such a severe trial in the subterranean abyss! But, alas!" added I (in a sorrowful tone) "I abuse myself; how shall I escape from hence, when I am utterly deprived of the means!" In effect, I had too good reason to say so; for a prisoner without money is like a bird whose wings are clipped.

Instead of the partridge and rabbit I had bespoke, they brought to me a little brown bread and a pitcher of water, and left me to fret at leisure in a dungeon, where I remained fifteen whole days, without seeing a human creature, except the turnkey, who came every morning to renew my pro-

vision. As often as I saw him I endeavoured to speak and enter into conversation with him, in order to divert me a little: but this venerable person made no answer to what I said; I could not extract one word from him, nay, for the most part, he came in and went out, without so much as deigning me a look. On the sixteenth day, the corregidor coming in, said, "Thou mayest now give a loose to joy. I bring thee agreeable tidings. I have ordered the lady who was along with thee to be conducted to Burgos. I examined her before her departure, and her answers have exculpated thee. Thou shalt be enlarged this very day, provided that the muleteer, with whom (as thou sayest) thou camest from Pennaflor to Cacabelos, confirms thy deposition. He is now at Astorga, and I have sent for him; and if he agrees with thee in the adventure of the rack, I will instantly set thee free."

These words gave me infinite joy! I looked upon myself as already acquitted; I thanked the judge for his just and expeditious decision, and had not quite finished my compliment, when the carrier, conducted by two soldiers, arrived: I remembered his face immediately; but he, having without doubt sold my portmanteau, and all that was in it, was afraid of being obliged to restore the money he had received for it, if he should own that he knew me; and therefore affirmed, with astonishing assurance, that far from knowing me, he had never seen me before!" "Ah traitor (cried I) rather confess that thou hast sold my goods; and bear witness to the truth: look at me again. I am one of the young people whom you threatened with the torture at the borough of Cacabelos, and frightened very much." The carrier answered coldly, that I talked of an affair of which he was utterly ignorant; and as he maintained to the last that I was unknown to him, my enlargement was deferred till another time: so that I was obliged

to arm myself with patience a-new, and resolve to regale myself still with my bread and water, and the sight of a silent turnkey.—The thoughts of being unable to free myself from the claws of justice, although I was not guilty of the least crime, threw me into despair! I wished myself again in the cavern, "where in the main (said I to myself) I was less disagreeably situated than in this dungeon; there I ate and drank in plenty, conversed with the robbers, and lived in the sweet hope of making my escape; instead of which, notwithstanding my innocence, I shall perhaps think myself happily quit, to get out of this place, in order to be sent to the galleys."

CHAPTER XIII.

While I passed my days in entertaining myself with these reflections, my adventures, such as they appeared in my deposition, spread all over the town; upon which many people being curious to see me, came and presented themselves, one after another, at a small chink through which the light was conveyed into my prison, and after having observed me for some time, went away. I was surprized at this novelty; for since the day of my imprisonment, I had not before seen a living soul at that window, which served to enlighten a court where horror reigned in silence. Guessing from this that I made some noise in town, I did not know whether to interpret it as a good or bad omen.

One of the first that offered themselves to my view was the little ballad-singer of Mondonedo, who, having been equally afraid of the torture, had fled as well as I.—I knew him again immediately,

and as he did not pretend to have forgot me, we saluted one another, and falling into a long conversation, I was obliged to repeat my adventures a-new: for his part he informed me of what had happened at the inn at Cacabelos, between the carrier and the new-married wife, after we had been driven away by a panic: in a word, he acquainted me with the whole of what I have already rehearsed on that subject. Afterwards taking leave of me for the present, he promised, without loss of time, to labour for my deliverance; and every body who came (as he did) through curiosity, seemed affected with my misfortune, and even assured me, that they would join the little ballad-singer, and do all that lay in their power to procure my enlargement.

They kept their promise effectually, and spoke in my behalf to the corregidor, who no longer doubting my innocence, especially when the ballad-singer had told him what he knew of the matter, at the end of three weeks came into the prison, and said, "Gil Blas, I don't choose to protract things: go, thou art free, and may'st quit the prison when thou wilt. But tell me (pursued he) if thou should'st be brought to the wood in which the subterranean retreat is, couldst thou not find it out?"—"No, Sir (I replied;) for as I went in at night, and came out before day, it would be impossible for me to fix upon the spot." Upon this the judge withdrew, telling me, that he was going to order the turnkey to set the prison doors open for me.—In effect the gaoler came into my dungeon a moment after, with one of his men carrying a bundle of clothes; and stripping me (with a grave and silent air) of my doublet and breeches, which were made of fine cloth, and almost new, they put me on a shabby footman's frock, and pushed me out by the shoulders.

The joy that prisoners commonly feel in recovering their liberty was moderated by my confusion

in seeing myself so poorly equipped; and I was tempted to leave the town instantly, that I might withdraw myself from the eyes of the people, whose looks I could scarce endure: but my gratitude got the better of my shame: I went to thank the ballad-singer, to whom I was so much obliged; and he could not help laughing when he saw me.—"What a strange figure you are! (said he) Justice I see has been done you in all her forms."—"I do not complain of justice (I replied) she is most equitable: I wish only that all her officers were honest men. They ought at least to have spared my clothes, which I think I paid for pretty handsomely."—"I think so too (said he) but they will tell you, these are formalities which must be observed. What do you think (for example) that your horse has been restored to the right owner? Not at all; I assure you he is now actually in the stable of the town-clerk, where he has been deposited as a proof of the robbery; and I don't believe the poor gentleman will ever retrieve so much as the crupper.—But let us shift our discourse (continued he) what is your design; What scheme do you intend to prosecute at present?"—"I want to go to Burgos (said I) in order to find out the lady I delivered, who will give me a few pistoles, with which I will purchase a new cassock, and repair to Salamanca, where I will endeavour to make my Latin turn to some advantage. All I am concerned at is, that I am at some distance from Burgos, and shall want subsistence on the road."—"I understand you (he replied) here is my purse:——'tis, indeed, a little low; but a ballad-singer, you know, is not a bishop." At the same time he slipped it into my hand so cheerfully, that I could not for my soul refuse the offer, such as it was. I thanked him as much as if he had given me all the gold in Peru, and made a thousand professions of service, which I never had an opportunity to perform. Then bidding him farewell, I left the town, with-

out having visited those other persons who had contributed to my enlargement; contenting myself with bestowing upon them in my own thoughts a thousand benedictions.

The little ballad-singer was in the right to speak modestly of his purse, in which I found very little money: but happily for me, I had been used two months to a very frugal diet; and I had still some rials left, when I arrived at the borough of Ponte de Mula, which is but a little way from Burgos. Here I halted to enquire about Donna Mencia, and going into an inn, the mistress of which was a little, lean, fierce, insolent creature, I perceived at once, by the disdainful look she darted me, that my frock was not at all to her liking; a disgust which I forgave with all my heart.—I sat down at table, where I eat some bread and cheese, and swallowed a few draughts of execrable wine, which they brought for me; and during this repast, which was very well suited to my dress, I wanted to enter into conversation with my landlady.—I begged her to tell me if she knew the Marquis of Guardia; if his castle was far from the borough; and, in particular, if she had heard what was become of the marchioness his lady? "You ask a great many questions," (replied she, with a scornful look.) She told me however (though with a very bad grace) that the castle of Don Ambrosio was but a short league from Ponte de Mula.

When I had done eating and drinking (it being by this time pretty late) I expressed a desire of going to rest, and bade them show me into a bed-chamber. "A bed-chamber for you! (said the landlady, darting at me a look full of haughtiness and contempt) I have no bed-chambers for people who sup on a morsel of cheese.—All my beds are bespoke:—I expect gentlemen of importance to lodge here to night; so that all I can do for you is to quarter you in the barn; and it won't, I suppose, be the first time you have slept upon straw." She

did not know how true she spoke; but I made no reply, and very wisely condescended to sneak into the straw, where in a very short time I slept like one who had suffered much fatigue.

CHAPTER XIV.

I DID not lie a-bed like a sluggard next morning, but went to reckon with my landlady, who seemed less proud and snappish than she had been the night before; a change that I ascribed to the presence of three honest soldiers belonging to the holy brotherhood, who conversed with her in a very familiar manner.—They had lodged all night at the inn, and it was, doubtless, for these gentlemen of importance, that all the beds had been bespoke.

Enquiring in the borough the way to the castle whither I wanted to go, I addressed myself by accident to a man of the character of my landlord at Pennaflor: not contented with answering the question I asked, he let me know that Don Ambrosio was dead three weeks ago, and that the marchioness his lady had retired into a convent at Burgos, which he named.—I repaired immediately to that city, instead of following the road to the castle, as I formerly intended, and flying directly to the convent where she was, begged the favour of the portress to tell her that a young man, just released from the gaol of Astorga, desired to speak with her. The nun went immediately to do what I desired, and returning, introduced me into a parlour, where I had not been long when I saw the widow of Don Ambrosio appear at the grate in deep mourning.

"You are welcome (said the lady to me); four days ago I wrote to a person at Astorga, desiring him to go to you from me, and tell you that I should be glad to see you, as soon as you should be released; and I did not doubt of your being enlarged in a very little time, what I said to the corregidor in your behalf having been sufficient for that purpose.—In answer to this he wrote, that you had recovered your liberty, but nobody knew whither you was gone; so that I was afraid I should never see you again, and consequently be deprived of the pleasure of manifesting my gratitude.—Don't be ashamed (added she, observing my confusion on account of appearing before her in such a miserable dress) let not your present condition give you the least uneasiness. After the important service you have done me, I should be the most ungrateful of all women, if I neglected to do something for you: I intend to extricate you out of the wretched situation in which you are: it is my duty, and I am able to perform it—the considerable wealth I am now mistress of empowering me to acquit myself towards you, without incommoding myself.

"You know (continued she) my adventures to the day on which we were both imprisoned; and I will tell you what has happened to me since.—When the corregidor of Astorga had ordered me to be conducted to Burgos, after having heard from my mouth a faithful relation of my story, I repaired to Don Ambrosio's castle, where my return occasioned extreme surprise, though I was told it was too late: for the marquis, thunderstruck at the news of my flight, had fallen ill, and the physicians despaired of his life. This was fresh cause for me to complain of the rigour of my fate: nevertheless, having advertised him of my arrival, I entered his chamber, and running to his bed-side, threw myself on my knees, my face bathed in tears, and my heart oppressed with the most afflicting grief!—What brings you hither (said he, when he

perceived me) Are you come to contemplate your own work? Was it not sufficient for you to deprive me of life, but you must also have the satisfaction of being an eye-witness of my death?'—'No, my lord, (I replied) Inez must have told you that I fled with my husband; and had it not been for the dismal accident which has robbed me of him, you never should have seen me again!' At the same time I let him know that Don Alvaro had been murdered by robbers, who afterwards carried me into their subterranean retreat; and, in short, informed him of all that had happened:—When I had done speaking, Don Ambrosio stretched out his hand to me, saying, with the utmost tenderness—'I am satisfied—I cease to complain:—Why should I reproach you! having found again a husband whom you dearly loved, you abandoned me to follow his fortune: ought I to blame you for such a conduct? No, madam, I should have been in the wrong to murmur at it, therefore would not suffer you to be pursued: I revered the sacred rights of your ravisher, and even your inclination towards him.—In fine, I do you justice; and, by your return, you have retrieved all my tenderness! Yes, my dear Mencia, your presence overwhelms me with joy! but, alas! it will not last long. I feel my last hour approaching! Scarce are you restored to my arms, when I must bid you an eternal adieu!' At these affecting words, my tears redoubled! I felt and expressed an immoderate affliction! I question if the death of Don Alvaro, whom I adored, had cost me more sighs! Don Ambrosio's presage of his own death was but too true: he expired next day; and I remained mistress of a considerable estate which he had settled upon me, at our marriage. I intend to make no bad use of it. The world shall not see me (though I am still young) throw myself into the arms of a third husband; for, besides that I think such a conduct

would be inconsistent with the virtue and delicacy of my sex, I own I have no longer any relish for the world; but design to end my days in this convent, and become a benefactress to it."

Such was the discourse of Donna Mencia, who, taking out a purse from under her robe, put it in my hand, saying, "Here are an hundred ducats, which I give you only to buy clothes: come and see me again, after you have equipped yourself; for I do not intend to confine my gratitude within such narrow bounds." I gave the lady a thousand thanks; and swore I would not part from Burgos without taking leave of her: after this oath, which I had no intention to break, I went in quest of an inn, and going into the first I perceived, demanded a room, telling the landlord (to prevent the bad opinion he might conceive of me, from the shabby frock) that notwithstanding my appearance, I was in a condition to pay handsomely for my lodging. At these words, the inn-keeper, whose name was Majuelo, naturally a great wag, surveying me from top to bottom, answered dryly, with a sarcastic sneer, there was no occasion for such an assurance, to persuade him that I should spend like a prince in his house: for he discovered something noble in me, by my dress; and, in short, did not doubt that I was a gentleman of very independent fortune. I could easily perceive that the rascal rallied me, and in order to put an end to his witticisms, shewed my purse. I even counted my ducats on a table before him, and observing that my coin altered his opinion very much in my favour, desired he would recommend me to a taylor. "You had better (said he) send for a broker, who will bring along with him all kinds of apparel ready made, and fit you in a trice." I approved of his advice, and resolved to follow it: but the day being near a close, deferred my purchase till next morning, and thought of nothing but making a good supper,

to indemnify me for the sorry meals I had made since my deliverance from the cavern

CHAPTER XV.

They brought for my supper a huge fricassee of sheep-trotters, which I picked to the bones; and having drank in proportion, betook myself to rest. As I had the convenience of a good bed, I was in hopes of enjoying a sound sleep: but for all that could not close my eyes; my thoughts being engrossed in determining upon the dress I was to choose. "What must I do; (said I to myself) prosecute my first design, buy a cassock, and go to Salamanca in quest of a tutor's place: But why should I take the habit of a licentiate? Am I ambitious of consecrating myself to the church? or have I the least bias that way? No: I feel myself (on the contrary) quite otherwise inclined: I will turn gentleman, and endeavour to make my fortune in the world."

Having resolved upon this, I longed for day with the utmost impatience: and no sooner perceived the glimpse of light, than I got up and made so much noise in the inn, that I wakened all those who were asleep. I called the waiters who were still a-bed, and who loaded me with curses by way of answer. They were obliged to rise, however, and I gave them no quarter, until one of them had gone for a broker, who soon appeared followed by two apprentices, carrying each a great green bag on his shoulders. He saluted me with great civility, saying, "Signor Cavalier, you are very happy in having applied to me, rather than to any other body. I don't choose to disparage my brethren. God forbid that I should prejudice their reputation

in the least! but between you and me, there is no conscience among them. They are all as unbounded as Jews. I am the only honest broker in town. I confine myself to a moderate profit: being satisfied with a pound in the shilling—I mean, a shilling in the pound. Thank heaven! I deal upon the square with all mankind."

The broker, after this preamble, which I took for gospel, ordered his men to untie the bundles, and shewed me suits of all colours. Some which were of plain cloth I rejected with disdain, as being too mean; but they made me try one which seemed to have been made exactly for my shape, and which struck my fancy although somewhat worn. It consisted of a doublet with slashed sleeves, a pair of breeches, and a cloak, the whole of blue velvet embroidered with gold. Fixing on this, I cheapened it, and the broker, perceiving I was bent upon it, observed that I had an excellent taste. "Odds bodikins! (cried he) one may see you know what you are about. I can tell you, that suit was made for one of the greatest lords in the kingdom, who never had it three times on his back. Examine the velvet, nothing can be finer; and as for the embroidery, you must confess the work is exquisite." "What will you sell it for?" said I. He answered, "Sixty ducats: I am a rogue if I have not refused the money." The alternative was plain. I offered five and forty, which might be about double the value. "Mr. What d' ye call 'um, (replied the broker, with an air of indifference) I never exact too much. I am always at a word. Here (continued he, showing me some of those I had refused) buy this. I'll sell it a pennyworth." This was only to excite my desire of purchasing that which I had cheapened; and accordingly, imagining that he would not abate one farthing of his price, I counted into his hand the sixty ducats. When he saw me part with them so easily, I believe, in spite of his boasted honesty, he wished

that he had asked a great deal more: pretty well satisfied, however, with having gained nineteen shillings in the pound, he went away with his apprentices, whom I had not forgotten.

Having now a very handsome cloak, doublet, and breeches, I spent the rest of the morning in providing other necessaries. I bought a hat, silk stockings, shoes, linen, and a sword: after which, having dressed, what infinite pleasure had I in beholding myself so well equipped! My eyes (to use the expression) could not sufficiently glut themselves with my attire! Never peacock contemplated his own feathers with more satisfaction. That very day I made my second visit to Donna Mencia, who still received me very kindly, and thanked me again for the service I had done her. On that score, many compliments passed on both sides; after which, wishing me all happiness, she bade me farewell, and retired without giving me any thing but a ring worth thirty pistoles, which she desired me to keep in remembrance of her.

I looked very blank with my ring, having laid my account with receiving a much more considerable present, and trudged back to my lodgings in a brown study, little satisfied with the lady's generosity. But just as I entered the inn, a man, who had followed me all the way, came in likewise, and laying aside the cloak in which he was muffled up, discovered a great bag under his arm. At the apparition of this bag, which had all the air of being full of money, I, as well as some other people who were present, stared with their eyes wide open; and I thought I heard the voice of an angel, when the man, laying the bag upon the table, pronounced, "Signor Gil Blas, here is something that my lady marchioness has sent you." I made many profound bows to the bearer, whom I overwhelmed with civility: and he was no sooner gone than I darted upon the bag, like a hawk upon his prey; and carrying it to my chamber, untied

it without loss of time, and found in it a thousand ducats. I had just made an end of counting them, when my landlord, who had heard what the porter said, came in to see the contents of the bag. Thunderstruck at the sight of my coin spread upon the table—"Zounds (cried he) what a vast sum of money is here! You must be a devil amongst the women, (added he, with a satirical smile) for although you have not been four and twenty hours in Burgos, you have a marchioness already under contribution."

This discourse did not disgust me; I was tempted to leave Majuelo in his mistake, which already gave me a sensible pleasure: so that I do not wonder that young fellows love to be thought men of intrigue. My innocence however got the better of my vanity: I undeceived my landlord, and recounted the story of Donna Mencia, to which he listened with great attention. I then disclosed the state of my affairs, and as he seemed to interest himself in my behalf, begged the assistance of his advice. Having mused a while, "Signor Gil Blas (said he) I have a regard for you; and since you have confidence enough in me to unbosom yourself in this manner, I will, without flattery, tell you what I think you are fittest for. As you seem designed by nature for the court, I advise you to go thither and attach yourself to some grandee: but be sure either to meddle in his concerns, or enter into his pleasure; otherwise you will lose your time. I know the great. They look upon the zeal and attachment of an honest man as nothing at all; and mind only such as are necessary to them. But you have another resource (continued he:) you are young and handsome; and these qualifications alone, without the least glimpse of understanding, are more than sufficient to captivate a rich widow, or some fine lady unhappily married: if love ruins gentlemen of fortune, it often maintains those who have none. It is my advice therefore, that you go

to Madrid; but you must by no means appear without attendants: they judge there, as in other places, by appearance; and you will be considered only in proportion to the figure you make. I will recommend a servant to you—a faithful domestic—a prudent, sober fellow—in one word a man of my own making. Purchase a couple of mules, one for yourself, and another for him, and set out as soon as possible."

This advice was too much to my own taste to be neglected: I therefore, next morning, bought two handsome mules, and hired the servant he had recommended: he was a fellow thirty years old, of a simple, religious aspect, born, as he said, in the kingdom of Gallicia; his name was Ambrose de Lamela; far from being selfish like other servants, he made no words about his wages, but assured me he would be contented with what in my goodness I should think proper to bestow. Having provided myself likewise with boots, and a portmanteau to hold my linen and cash, I cleared with my landlord, and early next morning set out from Burgos on my way to Madrid.

CHAPTER XVI.

We slept the first night at Duennas, and arriving at Valladolid the day following about four o'clock in the afternoon, alighted at an inn, which seemed one of the best in town. I left the care of my mules to my lacquey, and going up stairs into a chamber, whither I ordered a servant of the house to bring my portmanteau, felt myself a little fatigued, and without taking off my boots, threw myself on the bed, where I fell asleep, insensibly. It being almost night when I waked, I called for

Ambrose, who was gone out, but returned in a little time: when I asked where he had been, he replied with a pious air, that he was just come from church, where he had been to return thanks to heaven, for having preserved him from all evil accidents on the road from Burgos even unto Valladolid: I approved of his conduct, and bade him order a fowl to the fire for my supper.

At that very instant, my landlord entered with a taper in his hand lighting in a lady who seemed more handsome than young, and very richly dressed: she was squired by an old usher, and a little black moor carried her train. I was not a little surprised when this lady, after having made a low curtsey, asked if I was not Signor Gil Blas of Santillane, to which I had no sooner answered in the affirmative, than she quitted her attendant, and embraced me in a transport of joy, that redoubled my astonishment. "Blessed be heaven (cried she) for this meeting! You are the person, Signor Cavalier, you are the very person I was in quest of!" At this preamble I thought of the parasite at Pennaflor; and began to look upon the lady as a downright bite; when I was induced to think more favourably of her, by what followed. "I am (added she) cousin-german to Donna Mencia of Mosquera, who has been so much obliged to you; and received a letter from her this morning, importing, that having heard you was going to Madrid, I would oblige her very much, by treating you handsomely, provided you should pass this way: I have been running all over the town these two hours, enquiring from inn to inn, about all the strangers that arrived; and by the description your landlord gave me of you, I imagined you might be the deliverer of my cousin. Ah! now that I have found you (continued she) you shall see how sensible I am of the services you have done my family, and in particular, to my dear cousin! You shall come to my house immediately (if you please) where you will be more con-

veniently lodged than here." I would have excused myself, by representing to the lady, that I should incommode her family, but there was no resisting her importunities: there was a coach waiting for us at the door, in which she took care to see my portmanteau secured; "because (said she) there are a great many rogues in Valladolid:" an observation I found but too true! In short, I went into the coach along with her and her squire, and suffered myself to be carried away from the inn, to the mortification of the landlord, who by these means found himself disappointed of the money which he expected I would spend at his house.

Our coach having rolled for some time, stopped at a pretty large house, where we alighted, and went up stairs into an handsome apartment lighted by twenty or thirty wax-candles. We passed through a good many servants, of whom the lady asked if Don Raphael was come yet; and was answered in the negative; upon which, addressing herself to me, "Signor Gil Blas (said she) I have a brother whom I expect this evening from a villa we have two leagues from this: he will be very agreeably surprised to find in this house a gentleman to whom our whole family is so much indebted." She had scarce spoke these words, when we heard a noise below, which (we were told) was occasioned by the arrival of Don Raphael; and that cavalier, who was a young man of a good shape and genteel address, appeared soon after. "Brother (said the lady to him) I am extremely glad of your return! you will assist me in doing honour to Signor Gil Blas of Santillane; to whom we can never enough shew our gratitude for what he has done in behalf of our kinswoman Donna Mencia: there (added she, giving him a letter) you may read what she has wrote on the subject." Don Raphael opening the letter, pronounced these words aloud—

My dear Camilla,

SIGNOR Gil Blas of Santillane, who preserved my honour as well as my life, has set out for court; and as he will, doubtless, pass through Valladolid, I conjure you by the blood, and still more, by the friendship that unites us, to shew him all the respect in your power, and detain him some time in your family. I flatter myself, that you will give me that satisfaction, and that my deliverer will receive all manner of civility from you and my cousin Don Raphael. At Burgos, your affectionate kinswoman,

DONNA MENCIA.

"How! (cried Don Raphael) is this the gentleman to whom my cousin owes her honour and life? ah! heaven be praised for this happy rencounter!" So saying, he approached, and clasping me in his arms, "What joy do I feel (said he) in embracing Signor Gil Blas of Santillane! my cousin the marchioness had no occasion to lay such injunctions upon us: it would have been sufficient to let us know, that you was to pass through Valladolid. my sister and I know very well how to behave ourselves towards a gentleman, who has performed such an important piece of service to the person for whom, of all our family, we have the most tender regard." I answered as well as I could to these compliments, which were followed by a great many more of the same nature, and interspersed with a thousand caresses: after which, perceiving that my boots were still on, they ordered their servants to pull them off: and we went into another room, where the cloth being laid, the gentleman, lady, and I sat down to supper; during which, they said a thousand obliging things to me: not a word escaped me which they did not repeat as an admirable stroke of wit; and it was surprizing to see how attentive they were in presenting me with all the

daintiest morsels. Don Raphael drank frequently to the health of Donna Mencia, in which I followed his example; and I imagined that Camilla, who did us justice, sometimes threw certain very significant looks at me. I even observed that she chose proper opportunities of so doing, as if she had been afraid that her brother would perceive it. This was enough to persuade me of the lady's being smitten; and I flattered myself with the hope of profiting by that discovery, during my short stay at Valladolid. This hope induced me to yield, without difficulty, to their intreaties, when they requested me to spend a few days with them. They thanked me for my complaisance, and the joy which Camilla discovered on this occasion confirmed me in the opinion, that I had found the way to her heart.

Don Raphael seeing me determined to stay with him some time, proposed to carry me to his country house, of which he gave me a magnificent description; and talked of the pleasures he would there entertain me with. "Sometimes (said he) we will take the diversion of hunting, sometimes that of fishing, and if you love walking, we have delightful woods, and gardens in abundance: besides, we shall not want good company; and, on the whole, I hope you will not grow melancholy among us." I accepted his offer, and it was determined that we should go to this charming place the very next day.

Having projected this agreeable scheme, we rose from table; and Don Raphael embracing me, in a transport of joy, said, "Signor Gil Blas, I will leave my sister to entertain you, while I go immediately to give necessary orders, and advertise those people who I intend shall be of the party." So saying, he went out of the room, and I continued conversing with the lady, who did not contradict, by her discourse, the soft glances she had thrown at me. So she took hold of my hand, and, looking at my ring said, "You have got a pretty diamond enough, but it is a very small one. Are you a connoisseur

in stones?" When I answered in the negative, "I am sorry for it, (said she) for you might have told me what this is worth. With these words, she shewed me a large ruby on her finger, and, while I examined it, added, "An uncle of mine, who was governor of the Spanish colonies in the Philippine isles, made me a present of this ruby, which the jewellers here in Valladolid value at three hundred pistoles."—"I believe it is well worth the money, (said I) for it is extremely beautiful."—"Since you are pleased with it (she replied) I will make an exchange with you." And immediately she pulled off my ring, and put her own on my little finger. Having made this exchange, which I looked upon as a genteel way of making a present, Camilla squeezed my hand, and looked at me in the most languishing manner; then starting up abruptly, wished me good night, and withdrew in great confusion, as if she had been ashamed of disclosing her sentiments.

Novice as I was in gallantry, I knew well enough how to interpret this precipitate retreat in my favour, and concluded that I should pass my time very agreeably at their villa. Full of this flattering idea, and the prosperous condition of my affairs, I locked myself in the chamber where I was to lie, after having ordered my servant to come and wake me early in the morning; but instead of going to rest, I gave a loose to those agreeable reflections, which my portmanteau, that lay on the table, and my ruby, inspired. Thank heaven! said I to myself, if I have been unfortunate, I am no longer so. On one side a thousand ducats; a ring, worth three hundred pistoles on the other! My finances will not be exhausted in a hurry! I see now that Majuelo did not flatter me. I shall inflame the hearts of a thousand ladies at Madrid, since I have made such an easy conquest of Camilla. The favours of that generous lady presented themselves to my imagination, with all their charms: and I antici-

pated the diversions that Don Raphael prepared for me at his house in the country. In the midst of these pleasing images, however, Sleep did not fail to shed his poppies over me; so that, finding myself drowsy, I undressed, and went to bed.

Next morning, when I awaked, I perceived that it was already late, and was a good deal surprised that my valet did not appear in consequence of the order I had given him over night. Ambrose, said I to myself, my faithful Ambrose, is either at church, or very lazy to-day. But I soon lost that opinion of him, and conceived one much worse; for getting up, and missing my portmanteau, I suspected him of having stolen it in the night. For further information, I opened the chamber-door, and called the hypocrite several times; at last, an old man, hearing me, came and said, "What would you please to have, Signor? all your people departed from my house long before day." —"How (cried I) your house! am I not at present in the house of Don Raphael?"—"I don't know who that gentleman is, (said he) but you are in furnished lodgings, and I am the landlord: last night, an hour before your arrival, the lady who supped along with you came hither, and hired this apartment for a great lord, who, she said, travelled incognito; and even paid me beforehand."

I was no longer in the dark; I guessed the characters of Camilla and Don Raphael, and concluded that my servant, being perfectly well acquainted with my affairs, had sold me to these sharpers. Instead of ascribing this unlucky adventure to myself, and considering that it would not have happened to me, had I not been so indiscreet as to unbosom myself unnecessarily to Majuelo, I imputed all to innocent fortune, and cursed my fate a thousand times. The owner of the house, to whom I recounted the adventure, which, perhaps, he knew as well as I did, seemed affected with my sorrow, condoled me, and protested that

he was very much mortified to find that such a scene had passed in his house: but I believe, notwithstanding all his professions, he was as much concerned in the trick as my landlord at Burgos, to whom, however, I have always attributed the honour of the invention.

CHAPTER XVII.

Having heartily bewailed my misfortune, I considered, that instead of giving way to sorrow, I ought to animate myself against mischance; and summoning all my courage to my assistance, said to myself while I put on my clothes, by way of consolation, I am happy in that the rogues have not also carried off my apparel, and some ducats which I have still in my purse: I gave them credit for this piece of civility, and sold my boots, which they had been generous enough to leave likewise, to my landlord, for one-third of the money they had cost me. Then taking my leave of the ready-furnished lodging, without having occasion, thank God! for any body to carry my baggage, the first thing I did, was to go and see whether or not my mules were at the inn, where I alighted the preceding night; though I was of opinion that Ambrose had not left them there; and I wish to God my opinion of him had been always as just! for they told me, he had taken care to fetch them away that very evening: wherefore laying my account with having seen the last of them, as well as of my portmanteau, I strolled about the streets in a melancholy manner, musing on what should be my next course. I was tempted to return to Burgos, and have recourse to Donna Mencia once more; but when I reflected, that in so doing I

should abuse the generosity of the lady, and at the same time be looked upon as a booby, I relinquished that thought, swearing I should for the future be upon my guard against women; and I believe at the time, I should have mistrusted the chaste Susanna. I cast my eyes from time to time upon my ring, and when I considered that it was a present from Camilla, sighed with vexation. Alas! thought I, though I am no connoisseur in rubies, I have too good reason to know those who exchange them; and I believe it is not necessary that I should go to a jeweller, to be persuaded that I am a fool.

I was willing, however, to be informed of the worth of my ring, and accordingly shewed it to a lapidary, who valued it at three ducats. Though I was not surprised at this estimation, I wished the niece of the governor of the Philippine isles at the devil, or rather only repeated the wish. As I came out of the jeweller's house, a young fellow, who was passing, stopped to consider me. Not being able to recollect him at first, although I had formerly been intimate with him, "How, Gil Blas, (said he) do you pretend ignorance of me, or have two years altered the son of barber Nunnez so much, that you do not know him? don't you remember Fabricius, your companion and schoolfellow, with whom you have so often disputed, at the house of Doctor Godinez, upon predicables and metaphysical degrees?"

I remembered him before he had done speaking, and we embraced one another with transport. "My dear friend (continued he) how glad am I to meet thee! I can't express the joy I feel.—But (added he, with an air of surprize) what do I see! egad! thou art dressed like a prince! a fine sword, silk stockings, doublet, and cloak of velvet embroidered with silver!—Odd'sniggers! this smells strong of intrigues! I'll hold a wager that thou sharest the bounty of some liberal old lady."

—"You are mistaken, (said I) for my affairs are not so flourishing as you imagine."—"Pshaw, pshaw, (replied he) you affect to be a close fellow; that fine ruby on your finger, Mr. Gil Blas, whence comes that, I pray you?"—"It comes (said I) from an arrant jade. Fabricius, my dear Fabricius, far from being in vogue among the women at Valladolid, know that I am a most ridiculous dupe."

I pronounced these last words so ruefully, that Fabricius was convinced of my having been imposed upon, in some shape or other; and pressed me to tell him what were my reasons for complaining of the fair sex. I was easily prevailed upon to satisfy his curiosity; but as my story was pretty long, and besides, we had no intention of parting in a hurry, we went into a public house, that we might converse together more at our ease; and there, while we breakfasted, I recounted to him all that had happened to me, since my departure from Oviedo. He thought my adventures were extremely odd, and after having assured me, that he very much sympathized with me, in my present unlucky situation, said, "We must console ourselves, my child, as well as we can, for all the misfortunes of life. When a man of spirit is unlucky, he waits with patience for a more favourable conjuncture. One should never, as Cicero says, let himself be so much dejected as to forget that he is a man. For my own part, I am of that very disposition: my misfortunes have not been able to overwhelm me, because I am always above the caprice of fate. For instance, I loved a girl of some fashion at Oviedo, who had a tendre for me; I asked her in marriage of her father, and he refused me. Another, on this occasion, would have died of grief: but I (admire the force of genius) carried off the dear creature: as she was passionate, thoughtless, and vain, pleasure, of consequence, always determined her to the prejudice of duty. I led her a dance, of six months, through

the kingdom of Gallicia, from whence, as I had given her a taste for travelling, she was desirous of going to Portugal; but thought proper to choose a new conductor: here was another subject of despair, but, for all that, I did not sink under the weight of it, and wiser than Menelaus, instead of declaring war against the Paris who had stolen my Helen, I thought myself very much obliged to him for having rid my hands of her. Afterwards, being unwilling to return to the Asturies, that I might avoid all expostulation with justice, I advanced into the kingdom of Leon, spending, from town to town, the remainder of the money I had carried off with my infanta; for we had quitted Oviedo with the full hand; and arrived at Palencia with a solitary ducat, out of which I was obliged to buy a pair of shoes; so that the remaining part could not last much longer; my situation became very perplexing, and I was even reduced to a very strict regimen: there was no time to be lost, I resolved to go to service, and hired myself to a great woollen-draper, whose son was an accomplished rake. Here, though I found an asylum against hunger, I was not a little embarrassed; for the father ordered me to be a spy upon the son; and the son entreated me to assist him in cheating the father. Being obliged to determine, I preferred the entreaty to the command; and that preference cost me my place. I afterwards went into the service of an old painter, who would have taught me, through friendship, the principles of his art; in the demonstration of which, however, I was almost famished. This gave me a disgust for painting, and a disrelish for Palencia at the same time; and coming to Valladolid, by the greatest good fortune in the world, I got into the family of one of the directors of the hospital, where I now live perfectly happy. Signor Manuel Ordonnez, my master, is a man of profound piety, who walks with his eyes always fixed on

the ground, and a large rosary in his hand. They say, that from his youth, having nothing in view but the funds of the poor, he attached himself to them with indefatigable zeal; and accordingly his cares have not been ill requited; every thing prospers with him. What a blessing it is, that he has made himself rich in managing the affairs of the poor!"

Fabricius having harangued in this manner, "I am very glad (said I to him) to find thee so well satisfied with thy condition: but, between you and me, I think you might play a more honourable part in the world."—"You are mistaken, Gil Blas, (answered he) there is no situation in life more agreeable to one of my humour, than that which I now enjoy: the employment of a lacquey is troublesome, I own, to a silly fellow; but to a lad of spirit, it is full of charms. A superior genius that goes to service, does not confine himself to the menial circumstances of his duty, like a simpleton: he goes into a family to command rather than to obey; he begins by studying his master, he accommodates himself to his foibles, gains his confidence, and then leads him by the nose. 'Tis thus that I have behaved towards my director. I soon discovered his hypocrisy, and perceived that he wanted to pass for a person of great sanctity: I pretended to be his dupe; that cost nothing. I did more, I imitated him, and acting in his presence the same farce that he plays before others, I deceived the deceiver, and am, by degrees, become his factotum. Under his auspices, I hope one day to be concerned in the affairs of the poor; in which case I may chance to make my fortune too, for I find myself as well inclined towards them as he can be for his heart."

"These are fine hopes (replied I) my dear Fabricius: I congratulate thee upon thy prospect; and for my own part, will have recourse to my former scheme; convert my embroidered habit

into a cassock, repair to Salamanca, and listing myself under the banners of the university, perform the office of a tutor."—"A fine project truly (cried Fabricius;) an agreeable whim! what a fool wouldst thou be, to turn pedant at thy age! dost thou know, wretch! what thou art about to do? Soon as thou shalt be employed, the whole family will have their eyes on thee, and all thy actions will be scrupulously examined: thou must be eternally under constraint, clothe thyself with hypocrisy, and appear possessed of every virtue. Thou wilt not have a moment to bestow upon thy pleasures. Like a perpetual censor of thy pupil, thou must pass the day in teaching him Latin, and in rebuking him when he shall say or do any thing amiss: and after so much labour and constraint what will be the fruit of thy cares? If the little gentleman wants capacity, it will be said, thou hast not given him good education, and his parents will turn thee away, without any recompence; perhaps, even without paying thy appointments. Don't therefore talk to me of a preceptor's post, which is like a benefice with cure of souls: but commend me to the employment of a lacquey, which is a simple benefice, encumbered with no charge. When a master has vices, a superior genius in his service will flatter them, and often turn them to his advantage. A footman lives in a good family without the least disquiet; for after having eaten and drank his bellyful, he sleeps like the son of a lord, and gives himself no trouble about either baker or butcher.

"I should never ha' done, child, (continued he) was I to recount all the advantages of footmen. Take my advice, Gil Blas, quit, for ever, the design of becoming tutor, and follow my example."—"Yes; but, Fabricius, (said I) one does not always meet with directors; and if I should resolve to turn lacquey, I should at least choose to be well settled."—"Oh! you are in the right (said he;)

that shall be my business: I will insure thee a good place, if it was for no other reason, than to snatch a pretty fellow from the university."

The approaching misery with which I was threatened, and the air of satisfaction that appeared in Fabricius, persuading me more than his reasons, I determined to go to service: whereupon leaving the public house, my companion said, "I will conduct you to the house of a person, who is consulted by almost all the footmen out of place: he has spies, who inform him of what happens in all families; he knows where servants are wanted, and keeps an exact register, not only of the vacant places, but even of the good and bad qualities of masters: he is one who was formerly a friar in some convent or other; and, in short, 'twas he who recommended me to the place I now enjoy."

While we conversed about such a singular office of intelligence, the son of barber Nunnez carried me into a blind alley, and we entered a little house, where we found a man about fifty years old, writing at a table. We saluted him very respectfully; but whether he was naturally proud, or accustomed to see lacqueys and coachmen only, he had contracted an habit of receiving people cavalierly, and did not rise from his seat, but contented himself with making a slight inclination of the head. He looked hard at me, however, and I could easily perceive he was very much surprised that a young man dressed in embroidered velvet should want to turn valet; he had more reason to think I was come to be provided with one: but he did not continue long in suspense, with regard to my intention; for Fabricius, accosting him at once, said, "Signor Arias de Londonna, give me leave to present one of my best friends to you: he is a young man of a good family, whom misfortunes have reduced to the necessity of going to service. Pray inform him of a good place, and depend upon his gratitude."—"Gentlemen (answered Arias

coldly) this is the manner of you all: before you are fixed, you make the finest promises in the world; but when once you are well settled, you think no more of them." "How! (replied Fabricius) do you complain of me? have not I done honourably by you?"—"You might have done better still, (said Arias) your place is worth a clerk's employment; and you have paid me, as if I had introduced you to the house of an author." Here I interposed, and told Signor Arias, that to show him I was not ungrateful, my acknowledgment should precede his service; at the same time, taking out two ducats, I put them into his hand, with a promise that I should not stop there, provided I should find myself in a good family.

He seemed pleased with my behaviour, and said he loved to be treated in that manner: "There are (continued he) excellent posts vacant, which I will mention in order, that you may choose one that is to your liking." So saying, he put on his spectacles, opened a register which lay on the table, turned over some leaves, and began to read as follows: "A lacquey is wanted for Captain Torbellino, a passionate, cruel, whimsical man, who grumbles incessantly, swears, beats, and commonly maims, his servants."—"Let us pass on to the other, (cried I, at that picture) that captain is not to my taste." Arias smiled at my vivacity, and proceeded in this manner: "Donna Manuela of Sandoval, a superannuated widow, full of peevishness and caprice, has, at present, never a footman: she keeps but one for ordinary, and him never a whole day. There has been one livery suit in the house these ten years, which serves all valets who enter, of what size and shape soever they may be: but it may be said they only try it on; for it is still as good as new, although it has been worn by two thousand lacqueys. Doctor Alvar Fannez, a physician and chymist, wants a servant: his domesticks are well fed, handsomely entertained,

and have, moreover great wages; but he tries experiments upon them with his medicines, and there are often vacant places in his house."

"Oh! I believe it, (cried Fabricius, laughing) upon my conscience you show us abundance of fine places."—"Have patience, (said Arias de Londonna) we have not yet done; there are some that I am sure will please you." Then he continued to read in these terms. "Donna Alfonsa de Solis, an old devotee, who spends two thirds of the day at church, and insists upon her footman being always along with her, has not had a lacquey these three weeks. The licentiate Sedillo, an old canon of the chapter of this city, yesterday, in the evening, turned away his footman."—"Halt there, Signor Arias de Londonna (cried Fabricius, in this place) we will stick to this last post. The licenciate Sedillo is one of my master's friends, with whom I am perfectly well acquainted: I know that he has for housekeeper an old devotee called Dame Jacinta, who disposes of every thing in the house: it is one of the best families in Valladolid, for a servant who loves a quiet life and good cheer: besides, the canon is old and infirm, very much subject to the gout, and will soon make his will; so that there is room to hope for a good legacy. What a charming prospect for a footman! Gil Blas, (added he, turning towards me) let us lose no time, my lad, but go instantly to the house of the licentiate, where I will myself present you, and answer for thy character." At these words, for fear of losing such a fair opportunity, we took our leave, in a hurry, of Signor Arias, who assured me for my money, that if I should be balked of this place, I might depend upon his recommending me to one as good.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

GIL BLAS

or

SANTILLANE.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

WE were so much afraid of coming too late, that we made but one leap from the alley to the house of the old licentiate. We knocked at the door, which was opened by a girl ten years old, who passed for the housekeeper's niece, in spite of scandal; and asking if the canon could be spoke with, Dame Jacinta appeared: she was a person already arrived at the age of discretion, but still handsome; and, in particular, I admired the freshness of her complexion. She wore a long gown of coarse stuff, with a large leathern girdle, from one side of which hung a bunch of keys, and from the other a rosary of great beads. As soon as we perceived her, we bowed, with profound respect, and she returned the salute very civilly, but with a modest deportment and downcast eyes.

"Having understood (said my comrade to her)

that master licentiate Sedillo has occasion for an honest valet, I am come to present one, with whom, I hope, he will be satisfied." The housekeeper, at these words, lifting her eyes, surveyed me with attention, and, not being able to reconcile my embroidery with the discourse of Fabricius, asked if it was I who wanted the vacant place. "Yes, (said the son of Nunnez) it is this young man, who, notwithstanding his appearance, has met with misfortunes that oblige him to go to service. But he will soon forget his mishaps (added he, with an insinuating air) if he has the happiness to come into this family, and live with the virtuous Jacinta, who deserves to be housekeeper to the patriarch of the Indies." At these words, this pious governante moved her eyes from me, to consider the polite person who spoke, and, struck with his features, which were not altogether unknown to her, "I have (said she) a confused notion of having seen you somewhere! pray assist my recollection."—"Chaste Jacinta (answered Fabricus) I am proud of having attracted your notice: I have been twice in this house with my master Signor Manuel Ordonnez, director of the hospital."—"Ha! you're in the right (replied the housekeeper;) I remember it very well, and recollect your face. Ah! since you belong to Signor Ordonnez, you must be a lad of worth and honesty: your place proclaims your virtue, and this young man could not have a better recommendation. Come, (added she) I will bring you to speak with Signor Sedillo, who, I believe, will be very glad to have a servant of your presenting."

We followed her accordingly. The canon lodged on the ground floor, which consisted of four rooms well wainscotted; in one of which she desired us to wait a little, while she went into the next, where the licentiate was. After she had staid with him some time in order to give him his cue, she came and told us, that we might go in. We

perceived the old goutified canon, buried as it were in an elbow chair, with pillows under his head and arms and his legs supported on a large down cushion. While we approached him, we did not spare bows; and Fabricius being still spokesman, not only repeated what he had said of me to the housekeeper, but likewise extolled my merit, and enlarged chiefly on the honour which I had acquired in philosophical disputes, while I was with Doctor Godinez; as if it was necessary that a canon's footman should be a profound philosopher. Nevertheless this fine eulogium that he bestowed on me, did not fail to cast a mist before the eyes of the licentiate, who observing besides, that I was not disagreeable to Dame Jacinta, said to my recommender, "Friend, I take into my service the young man whom thou hast brought. I am satisfied, and conceive a favourable opinion of his morals, since he is presented by a domestic of my good friend Signor Ordonnez."

As soon as Fabricius saw that I was engaged he made a low bow to the canon, another still lower to the governante, and withdrew, very well satisfied, after having whispered to me that we should see one another often, and that I had nothing to do but to stay where I was.—When he was gone, the licentiate asked my name, and reasons for leaving my native country; and by these questions engaged me, in presence of Dame Jacinta, to recount my story. They were both very much diverted, especially with the account of my last adventure, Camilla and Don Raphael tickling them so much, that it was like to have cost the old canon his life; for while he laughed with all his force, he was seized with such a violent fit of coughing, that I imagined it would have been his last. As he had not yet made his will, you may easily guess how his housekeeper was alarmed: trembling and astonished she ran to the assistance of the good man, rubbed his forehead, and clapped

him on the back, as is practised with children when they have the chin-cough. However, this was but a false alarm: the old man ceased to cough, and his governante to torment him; and I would have finished my story, had not Dame Jacinta, who dreaded another fit, opposed it, and carried me out of the canon's chamber into a wardrobe, where, among several suits of clothes, was that of my predecessor. This she made me put on, and leave my own in its room, which I was not sorry to preserve, in hopes that it would still be of use to me. After which we went to prepare dinner.

I was not a novice in the art of dressing victuals, having served a happy apprenticeship under Dame Leonarda, who might have passed for a good cook: she was not, however, comparable to Dame Jacinta, who, for aught I know, would have gained the palm from the cook of the archbishop of Toledo. She excelled in every thing: her soups were exquisite, on account of her art in choosing and mixing the different kinds of gravy, of which they were composed; and her hashes were seasoned in such a manner, as rendered them extremely agreeable to the palate.—When dinner was ready, we returned into the canon's chamber, where, while I laid the cloth on a table set just by his elbow chair, the housekeeper tucked a napkin under the old man's chin, and tied it over his shoulders. In a moment after I brought a mess of porridge, that might have been presented to the most celebrated director of Madrid; and two courses, which would have stimulated the sensuality of a viceroy, had not Dame Jacinta been sparing of her spices for fear of inflaming the gout of the licentiate.—At sight of these delicate dishes, my old master, whom I believed impotent in all his members, showed me, that he had not as yet lost entirely the use of his arms; he helped to disencumber himself of his pillows, and cheerfully prepared himself for

eating.—Though his hand shook, it did not refuse its service, but went and came with great expedition; in such a manner, however, that it spilt upon the table-cloth and napkin one half of what was intended for his mouth.—I took away the soup when he had done with it, and brought in a roasted partridge, flanked with two quails, which Dame Jacinta carved for him. —She took care also to make him drink frequently large draughts of wine, a little diluted in a large and deep silver cup, which she held to his mouth, as if he had been a child of fifteen months. He fell tooth and nail upon his course, and did no less honour to the birds than he had done to the porridge; but when he had stuffed himself to the tongue, the devotee untied his napkin, replaced his pillows, and left him in quiet to take his afternoon's nap in his chair; while we, having uncovered the table, went to dinner in our turn.

In this manner did our canon dine every day, who, for aught I know, was the greatest glutton of the whole chapter: though his supper was commonly more slight, consisting, for the most part, of a pullet and some conserves. I fed well in this house, and lived a very peaceable life, having only one grievance, which was no other than being obliged to watch my master, and pass the whole night like a nurse.—Besides a retention of urine, that obliged him to ask for his chamber-pot ten times in an hour, he was subject to profuse sweats; and when this happened, it was my business to shift him. "Gil Blas (said he, the second night) thou hast activity and address; and I foresee that I shall be very well pleased with thy service.—I recommend to thee above all things to behave thyself respectfully towards Dame Jacinta; she is a wench who has served me these fifteen years with a singular zeal, and takes such care of my person, that I can never enough show my gratitude: wherefore I own she is more dear to me than all my re-

lations. For the love of her I have turned out of doors my nephew, my own sister's son, who paid no respect to the poor girl; and, far from doing justice to the sincere attachment she has for me, the insolent boy treated her as an hypocrite; for in this age all virtue appears hypocrisy to young people.—Thank heaven! I have got rid of the scoundrel: I prefer the love that is manifested for me to all the ties of blood, and am swayed only by the benefits I receive."—"You are in the right, sir (said I to the licentiate:) gratitude ought to have more weight with us than the laws of nature."—"Doubtless, (he replied) and people will see by my last will, that I have no regard for my relations. My housekeeper will have a good share, and thou shalt not be forgot, provided that thou goest on to serve me as thou hast begun. The footman whom I turned away yesterday has lost a good legacy by his own folly; if that paltry fellow had not, by his misbehaviour, obliged me to dismiss him, I would have made his fortune; but he was a proud coxcomb, who was deficient in his respect for Dame Jacinta; and an idle rascal, who dreaded the smallest trouble.—He, forsooth, did not love to watch over me, and looked upon it as a great fatigue to spend the night in contributing to my ease."—"Ah, the wretch! (cried I, as if the genius of my friend had inspired me) he was not worthy of living with such an honourable master! A lad who has the happiness of appertaining unto you, ought to be indefatigable in his zeal: he ought to make a pleasure of his duty, and not to think himself fatigued even when he sweats blood and water for your service."

I perceived that these words were very agreeable to the licentiate, who was no less satisfied with the assurance I gave him of being always perfectly resigned to the will of Dame Jacinta. Willing therefore to pass for a valet whom fatigue could not dispirit, I did my duty with the best

grace I could assume, and never complained of being up all night; a circumstance which, however, I found very disagreeable; and had it not been for the legacy with which I fed my hopes, I should have been very soon disgusted with my condition. —Indeed I slept some hours in the day-time; and the governante, to do her justice, had a good deal of regard for me.—This must be ascribed to the care I took in gaining her good graces, by the most complaisant and respectful behaviour; when I was at table with her and her niece, whose name was Inesilla, I shifted their plates, filled wine, and served them with a most particular attention; by which means I insinuated myself into their friendship. One day, while Dame Jacinta was gone out to market, seeing myself alone with Inesilla, I began to converse with her, and asked if her father and mother were still alive. "O! not at all (answered she) they are dead long—long ago,—my good aunt told me so. As for my own part, I never saw them." I sincerely believed the little girl, though her answer was not categorical; and put her into such a humour of talking, that she told me more of the matter than I wanted to know. She informed me, or rather I gathered from her artless chat, that her good aunt had a very good friend, who lived likewise with an old canon, whose temporalities he managed; and that these happy domesticks expected to join the pillage of their masters by a marriage, the sweets of which they tasted before-hand. I have already observed, that Dame Jacinta, though somewhat superannuated, had still a freshness of complexion. True indeed, she spared nothing to preserve it; for, besides a clyster which she took every morning, she swallowed during the day, and when she went to bed, some excellent jellies of her own composing, and slept soundly all night, while I watched my master: but that which, perhaps, contributed more than any thing to preserve her colour from fading

was an issue, which Inesilla told me she had in each leg.

CHAPTER II.

I SERVED the licentiate Sedillo three months without complaining of the bad nights he made me pass; at the end of which time he fell sick of a fever, and felt his gout increased by the pain which it occasioned; so that, for the first time in his life, which had been long, he had recourse to physicians, and sent for Doctor Sangrado, whom all Valladolid looked upon as another Hippocrates. Dame Jacinta would have been better pleased, if the canon had begun by making his will, and even dropped some hints on the subject; but, besides that he did not believe himself near his end, in some certain things he was extremely obstinate: I therefore went in search of Dr. Sangrado, and brought him to the house. He was a tall, meagre, pale man, who had kept the shears of Clotho employed during forty years at least.—This learned physician had a very solemn appearance, weighed his discourse, and gave an emphasis to his expressions: his reasoning was geometrical, and his opinions extremely singular.

After having examined the symptoms of my master's disease, he said to him with a very physical air, "The business here is to supply the defect of perspiration, which is obstructed: others, in my place, would doubtless prescribe saline draughts, diuretics, diaphoretics, and such medicines as abound with mercury and sulphur; but cathartics and sudorifics are pernicious drugs, and all the preparations of chymistry are only calculated to

do mischief: for my own part, I practise a method more simple, and more sure.—Pray, what is your ordinary diet?"—"My usual food (replied the canon) is broth and juicy meat."—"Broth and juicy meat! (cried the doctor, surprized) truly, I do not wonder to find you sick: such delicious victuals are poisoned pleasures, and snares that luxury spreads for mankind, in order to ruin them the more effectually. You must renounce all palatable food: the most salutary is that which is most insipid; for as the blood is insipid, it requires such victuals as partake the most of its own nature.—And do you drink wine?" (added he.)—"Yes (said the licentiate) wine diluted."—"O! diluted as much as you please (replied the physician:) what an irregularity is here? what a frightful regimen! you ought to have been dead long ago. How old are you, pray?"—"I am going in my sixty-ninth year" (replied the canon.)—"Right (said the physician;) an early old age is always the fruit of intemperance. If you had drank nothing else than pure water all your life, and had been satisfied with simple nourishment, such as boiled apples for example, you would not now be tormented with the gout, and all your limbs would perform their functions with ease. I do not despair, however, of setting you to rights again, provided you be wholly resigned to my directions."

The licentiate having promised to obey him in all things, Sangrado sent me for a surgeon, whom he named, and ordered him to take from my master six good porringers of blood, as the first effort, in order to supply the want of perspiration. Then he said to the surgeon, Master Martin Omnes, return in three hours, and take as much more: and repeat the same evacuation to-morrow. It is a gross error to think that blood is necessary for the preservation of life: a patient cannot be blooded too much; for as he is obliged to perform no considerable motion or exercise, but just only to

breathe, he has no more occasion for blood than a man who is asleep; life, in both, consisting in the pulse and respiration only." The doctor having ordered frequent and copious evacuations of this kind, he told us, that we must make the canon drink warm water incessantly; assuring us that water, drank in abundance, was the true specific in all distempers whatever. And when he went away, he told Dame Jacinta and me, with an air of confidence, that he would answer for his patient's life, provided we would treat him in the manner he had prescribed. The governante, who possibly thought otherwise of this method, protested that it should be followed with the utmost exactness. Accordingly we set about warming water with all dispatch; and as the physician had recommended to us, above all things, not to be too sparing of it, we made my master drink for the first dose two or three pints, at as many draughts. An hour after we repeated it, and returning to the charge, from time to time, overwhelmed his stomach with a deluge of water: the surgeon seconding us, on the other hand, by the quantity of blood which he drew from him, in less than two days the old canon was reduced to extremity.

This good priest, being quite spent, said to me with a feeble voice, as I presented him with a large glass of the specific, "Hold, Gil Blas, give me no more of it, my friend: I see plainly that I must die, in spite of the virtues of water; and though there is scarce a drop of blood left in my body, I don't find myself a whit the better: which is a plain proof, that the most expert physician in the world cannot prolong our days, when their fatal period is arrived: go therefore and fetch a notary, for I want to make my will." At these last words, which I was not sorry to hear, I affected to seem melancholy, and concealing the desire I had to execute his commission, "Well, but Sir, (said I) you are not yet so low, thank God, but that you

may recover."—"No, no, child, (replied he) it is all over with me. I feel the gout mounting upwards, and death approaching. Make haste, therefore, and do as I bid thee." I perceived, sure enough, that he changed visibly, and the affair appeared so urgent that I went out as fast as possible to fulfil his orders; eaving with him Dame Jacinta, who was more afraid than I that he would die intestate. I went into the house of the first notary I was directed to, and finding him at home, "Sir, (said I) the licentiate Sedillo, my master, draws towards his end, and wants to have his last will made; so that there is not a moment to lose." The notary, who was a brisk old man, and took delight in rallying, asked what physician attended the canon; I answered, Doctor Sangrado. —At that name, seizing his hat and cloak in a hurry, "Zooks! (cried he) let us make haste; for the doctor is so expeditious that he seldom gives his patients time to send for notaries: that man has choused me out of a great many jobs."

So saying, he followed me with great eagerness, and while we walked together at a good pace, that we might arrive before he should be at the last gasp, "Sir, (said I to him) you know that a testator at the point of death is apt to forget things: now, if my master should not remember me, I beg you will remind him of my zeal and attachment." —"That I will, my child: (replied the little notary) thou mayest depend upon me for that. I will even advise him to give thee something considerable; let him be never so little disposed to reward thy service." The licentiate, when we came into his chamber, had still the use of his senses, and Dame Jacinta, who was with him, her visage bathed in tears, which she had at command, had played her part, and bespoke the good man's benevolence. So that she and I left the notary alone with him, and went into the antichamber, where, meeting the surgeon whom the doctor had

sent to make one evacuation more, we stopped him. "Hold, Mr. Martin (said the governante) you cannot go into Signor Sedillo's chamber at present; he is dictating his last will to a notary who is with him; when that is done, you shall have leave to do your office."

This pious gentlewoman and I were much afraid that the licentiate would die before his will could be finished: but happily for us, the deed that occasioned our disquiet was executed: and the notary, finding me in his way as he came out, clapped me on the shoulder, saying, with a smile, "Gil Blas is not forgotten." These words inspired me with excessive joy; and I thought myself so much obliged to my master for having remembered me, that I promised to pray with all my heart for his soul, after his death, which soon happened; for the surgeon having blooded him again, the poor old man, who was but too much exhausted before, expired almost during the operation. As he breathed his last sighs, the physician came in, and looked very foolishly, notwithstanding his long practice of dispatching patients. Nevertheless, far from imputing the canon's death to his watery draughts and evacuations, he observed as he went out, with an air of indifference, that the patient had not lost blood enough, nor drank a sufficient quantity of warm water; while the executioner of this sublime art, I mean the surgeon, seeing also that there was no more occasion for his office, followed Doctor Sangrado.

As soon as the breath went out of our patron's body, Dame Jacinta, Inesilla, and I, raised a concert of mournful cries which were heard all over the neighbourhood: the governante especially, who had the greatest cause to rejoice, uttered such doleful accents, that one would have thought she was the most afflicted person upon earth; and the chamber was instantly filled with people drawn thither more by curiosity than compassion. The

relations of the deceased no sooner learned the news of his death than they poured into the house, to seal up every thing, and found the housekeeper in such affliction, that they imagined at first the canon had not made his will: but they soon understood that there was one sanctioned by all the usual formalities; which when they came to open, and saw that the testator had disposed of his best effects in favour of Dame Jacinta and the little girl, they made his funeral speech in terms not much to the honour of his memory: they pronounced an eulogium on the devotee, at the same time, and even bestowed some praises on me, who I must own, deserved some at their hands: for the licentiate (rest his soul!) in order to make me remember him as long as I should live, explained himself in an article of his will, with regard to me, in this manner.—"Item, as Gil Blas is a young man of some understanding already, in order to complete his learning, I leave to him my library, all my books and manuscripts without exception."

I could not conceive where this pretended library could be, having never perceived any such thing in the house. I knew only of a few papers, with five or six volumes that stood upon a shelf in my master's closet; and these were my legacy; though the books could not be of any great service to me, one being entitled, The Complete Housewife; another treated of, Indigestion and the Method of Cure; the rest were, The four Parts of the Breviary, which the moths had almost consumed. With regard to the manuscripts, the most curious contained all the proceedings of a law-suit in which he was once engaged for his prebend. After having examined the legacy with more attention than it deserved, I left it to the relations who envied me so much. I gave them back the very clothes I wore, and resumed my own; claiming my wages only, as the fruit of my service, and resolving to seek a place elsewhere. As for Dame

Jacinta, besides the money which was left to her, she was in possession of some valuable effects, which, by the assistance of her good friend, she had found means to secrete during the licentiate's last illness.

CHAPTER III.

I RESOLVED to visit Signor Arias de Londonna, and consult his register for a new place; but as I was just going into the blind alley where he lived, I met Doctor Sangrado, whom I had not seen since the death of my master, and took the freedom to salute him. He recollected me immediately, although I had changed my dress, and expressing some joy at seeing me, "Art thou there, my child, (said he) I was just thinking of thee; having occasion for a good lad to serve me, I imagined that thou wouldest answer my purpose very well; if thou canst read and write."—"Sir, (answered I) in that particular I can do your business." "Say'st thou so (said he;) then thou art the man I want: come to my house, where thou shalt find every thing agreeable: I will treat thee with distinction; and though I give no wages, thou shalt want for nothing: I will take care to maintain thee handsomely; and will even discover to thee the great mystery of curing all diseases; in a word, thou shalt rather be my pupil than my servant."

I accepted the doctor's proposal, in hopes of making myself illustrious in physick, under the auspices of such a learned master; and he carried me home with him on the instant, in order to initiate me in the employment for which I was designed. This employment consisted in writing the names

and places of abode of the patients who sent for him while he was abroad: for this purpose, there was in the house a register, in which an old woman, who was his sole domestic, set down their several directions: but besides that she was utterly ignorant of spelling, she wrote so ill that for the most part it was impossible to decypher her scrawl. I was invested with the charge of this book, which might have been with great justice stiled a register of the dead; for almost all the people whose names it contained gave up the ghost. I inserted in it (to use the expression) the names of those people who were to set out for the other world, as the clerk of a stage-coach-office registers those who take places. The pen was seldom out of my hand, because there was not at that time a physician in Valladolid of more credit than Doctor Sangrado, who had acquired great reputation with the public, by a pomp of words, a solemn air, and some lucky cures which had done him more honour than he deserved.

He did not want practice, nor of consequence money, which however did not make us fare the better, his housekeeping being extremely parsimonious; our ordinary food consisting of peas, beans, boiled codlins, or cheese; which aliments (he said) were agreeable to the stomach, as being most proper for trituration, in other words, easily brayed. Notwithstanding this his opinion, however, he did not approve of our eating a belly-full even of them: in which, to be sure, he was much in the right: but, if he forbid his maid and me to eat a great deal, he allowed us, by way of recompence, to drink as much water as we could swallow: far from restricting us in this particular, he would sometimes say, "Drink, my children, health consists in the suppleness and humectation of the parts: drink water in great abundance: it is an universal menstruum that dissolves all kinds of salt. When the course of the blood is too languid,

this accelerates its motion; and when too rapid, checks its impetuosity." The honest doctor was so well convinced of the truth of this doctrine, that he himself drank nothing but water, though he was well stricken in years. He defined old age, a natural decay, that withers and consumes us; and in consequence of this definition, deplored the ignorance of those who call wine "the milk of old men:" for he maintained that the juice of the grape wastes and destroys them; and with great eloquence observed, that this fatal liquor is to them, as to all the world, a treacherous friend and deceitful pleasure.

In spite of all this fine reasoning, I had not been eight days in the house when I was seized with a looseness, and began to feel great disorder in my bowels, which I was rash enough to ascribe to the universal dissolvent and meagre subsistence on which I lived. I complained of it to my master, in hopes that he would relent and allow me a little wine at meals: but he was too much an enemy to that liquor to gratify my expectation. "If thou feelest in thyself (said he to me) any reluctance to simple element, there are innocent aids in plenty, that will support thy stomach against the insipid taste of water; sage, for example, and balm will give it an admirable flavour; and an infusion of corn-poppy, gillyflower, and rosemary, will render it still more delicious.

Notwithstanding all he could say in praise of water and the excellent beverages he taught me to compose, I drank of it with such moderation, that perceiving my temperance, he said, "Why, truly, Gil Blas, I am not at all surprised that thou dost not enjoy good health. Thou dost not drink enough, my friend. Water taken in small quantities serves only to disentangle the particles of the bile, and give them more activity; whereas they should be drowned in a copious dilution: don't be afraid, my child, that abundance of water will

weaken and relax thy stomach: lay aside that panic fear which perhaps thou entertainest of plentiful drinking. I will warrant the consequence, and if thou dost not look upon me as a sufficient bondsman, Celsus himself shall be thy security. That Roman oracle bestows an admirable eulogium on water, and afterwards says, in express terms, that those who excuse their drinking of wine, on account of a weak stomach, do a manifest injury to that organ, by using such a cloak for their own sensuality."

As it would not have looked well for me to show myself intractable in the very beginning of my career in physic; I seemed persuaded of his being in the right, and will even own I was effectually convinced; so that I continued to drink water on the guaranty of Celsus, or rather to drown my bile in copious draughts of that liquor; and although I felt myself every day more and more incommoded by it, prejudice got the better of experience; so happily was I disposed by nature for becoming a physician. I could not always, however, resist the violence of my disorder, which increased to such a degree, that I resolved, at length, to leave Doctor Sangrado; but he invested me with a new employment which made me change that resolution. "Hark'ee, my child, (said he one day) I am not one of those harsh and ungrateful masters who let their domestics grow grey in their service, before they recompense them. I am well pleased with thy behaviour, I have a regard for thee, and without further delay will make thy fortune. I will immediately disclose to thee the whole extent of that salutary art which I have professed so many years. Other physicians make this consist in the knowledge of a thousand difficult sciences: but I intend to go a shorter way to work, and spare thee the trouble of studying pharmacy, anatomy, botany, and physic: know, my friend, all that is required is to bleed the patients

and make them drink warm water. This is the secret of curing all the distempers incident to man. Yes! that wonderful secret which I reveal to thee, and which nature, impenetrable to my brethren, hath not been able to hide from my researches, is contained in these two points, of plentiful bleeding and frequent draughts of water. I have nothing more to impart; thou knowest physic to the very bottom, and reaping the fruit of my long experience, art become in a twinkling as skilful as I am. Thou mayest (continued he) ease me not a little, at present; in the morning thou shalt keep our register, and in the afternoon go and visit a part of my patients: while I take care of the nobility and clergy, thou shalt go in my room to the houses of tradesmen, where I am called: and when thou shalt have practised some time, I will procure thy admission into the faculty. Thou art learned, Gil Blas, before thou turnest physician; whereas others prescribe a long time, generally all their lives, without ever becoming learned."

I thanked the doctor for having enabled me with such dispatch to serve as his deputy; and, as an acknowledgment of his favours, assured him that I would follow his maxims as long as I lived, even if they should be contrary to those of Hippocrates. But this assurance was not altogether sincere; for I disapproved of his opinion with regard to water, and resolved to drink wine every day, when I went out to visit my patients. I committed my own clothes to a peg for a second time, and put on a suit of my master's, that I might appear in all respects like a physician: after which, I prepared myself for exercising medicine at the expence of whom it should concern. My coup d'essai being upon an alguazil who was ill of a pleurisy, I ordered him to be blooded without mercy and filled to the tongue with water: I went afterwards into the house of a pastry-cook who lay roaring with the gout, and whose blood I was no more

sparing of than the alguazil's; taking care also not to restrict him in the article of water. For these prescriptions I received twelve rials, which made me so enamoured of the profession, that I thought "the more mischief the better sport." Coming out of the pastry-cook's house, I met Fabricius, whom I had not seen since the death of the licentiate Sedillo; and who, having looked at me some minutes with surprise, set his hands in his sides, and burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter. It was not without reason; for having a cloak that trailed on the ground, with a doublet and breeches that would have served a man four times as big as me, my figure was truly original. I let him laugh till he was tired, not without being tempted to follow his example; but I constrained myself in order to preserve decorum, and the better ape the physician, who is no risible animal. If my ludicrous appearance had excited the mirth of Fabricius, my gravity increased it; and when he had indulged it sufficiently, "Upon my conscience, Gil Blas (said he) thou art pleasantly equipped. Who the devil has disguised thee in this manner?"—"Softly, friend (replied I) softly.—Learn to show more respect for another Hippocrates; and know, that I am the deputy of Doctor Sangrado, the most celebrated physician of Valladolid, with whom I have lived these three weeks. He has taught me physic to the very bottom, and as he cannot, in person, attend all the sick who send for him, I assist him in his visitation: he takes care of the great, and I of the plebeians."—"Very well, (replied Fabricius) he leaves the blood of the commonalty to thee, while he reserves that of the gentry to himself; I congratulate thee upon thy share; for it is better to have to do with the populace than with persons of fashion: happy is a suburb physician! his faults are less observed, and his assassinations less known. Yes, my child (added he) thy situation is to be envied, and to speak in the

words of Alexander, if I was not Fabricius, I could wish to be Gil Blas."

To show the son of barber Nunnez, that he had reason to praise the happiness of my present condition, I produced the rials which I had received from the alguazil and pastry-cook; upon which we went into a public house in order to spend some of them: here we were served with pretty good wine, which the longing desire I had of tasting that liquor, made me think still better than it was, I drank huge draughts of it, and (no disparagement to the Roman oracle) the more I filled my stomach, the less did that organ complain of the injury it received. Fabricius and I having staid together a long time in the public house, and laughed heartily at the expence of our masters, as the custom is among servants, we parted in the twilight, after having made a mutual promise of meeting again in the same place, next day in the afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD just got home when Doctor Sangrado came in, to whom I gave an account of the patients I had visited, and put into his hand eight rials which remained of the twelve I had received for my prescriptions. "Eight rials! (said he, after having counted them) this is a small matter for two visits; but we must refuse nothing." So it appeared: for he kept six, and gave me two. "Hold, Gil Blas, (added he) there is something for thee to begin stock; I allow thee a fourth part of what thou shalt get, and thou wilt be rich in a very short time (my friend,) for, please God, there will be plenty of diseases this season."



R. Smirke R.A. pinx.t C. Warren Sculpt

GIL BLAS. VOL. I.

DOCTOR SANGRADO CONSULTED BY THE LICENTIATE SEDILLO. | LE DOCTEUR SANGRADO CONSULTÉ PAR LE LICENCIÉ SÉDILLO.

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I had reason to be contented with my share; because, resolving to detain always a third part of what I should receive from the patients, and afterwards touching a fourth of what should remain, it would on the whole (if there be any truth in arithmetic) amount to one half of what I should earn. This consideration inspiring me with new ardour for my profession, next day when I had dined, I resumed my physical dress, and going out, visited several patients whom I had registered, and whom I treated after the same manner, though their distempers were quite different. Hitherto things had gone smoothly on, and nobody (thank Heaven) found fault with my prescriptions; but however excellent the practice of physic may be, it cannot escape censure. Going into the house of a grocer whose son was dropsical, I there met with a little swarthy physician called Doctor Cuchillo, whom a relation of the grocer's had brought along with him: I made profound bows to every body present, and in particular, to the person who (I concluded) was called to consult with me about the distemper of the patient; he saluted me with great gravity, then eyeing me attentively for some minutes, "Signor Doctor (said he) pray excuse my curiosity: I thought I had been acquainted with all my brethren the physicians of Valladolid; but I confess your features are utterly unknown to me: sure you must not have been long settled in this city." I answered that I was a young practitioner, who as yet only prescribed under the auspices of Doctor Sangrado. "I congratulate you (said he, bowing) on your having embraced the method of such a great man; and I do not doubt that you are already master of your business, notwithstanding your youthful appearance." He spoke this so naturally, that I did not know whether he was in jest or earnest, and I was thinking upon some answer, when the grocer interposing, said, "Gentlemen, I am persuaded that you are both perfectly

well acquainted with the art of physic, therefore, pray examine the situation of my son, and prescribe what you shall judge proper for his cure."

Accordingly, the little doctor inquired into the state of our patient, and after having made me observe all the symptoms of the disease, asked in what manner I proposed to treat him. "I am of opinion (said I) that he should be blooded every day, and drink hot water in abundance." At these words the little physician said with a satirical grin, "And do you think these remedies will save his life?" "Never doubt that, (cried I, in a resolute tone) they must certainly produce that effect, being (as Doctor Sangrado observes) specifics against all kinds of distempers." "At that rate (replied he) Celsus is very much to blame, in assuring us, that for the more easy cure of a dropsy, it is requisite to make the patient suffer both hunger and thirst." —"Oh, Celsus, I resumed, is not my oracle: he was as liable to mistakes as any other; and I have sometimes found my account in acting quite contrary to his opinion."—"I perceive by your discourse (said Cuchillo) the sure and satisfactory method that Doctor Sangrado would insinuate into young practitioners: the whole of his practice consists in bleeding and aqueous draughts; therefore I am not at all surprised to see so many honest people die under his hands."—"None of your invectives (said I, interrupting him with some heat,) it does not look well to hear a man of your profession cast such reflections. Come, come, Mr. Doctor, abundance of sick people are sent to the other world without being blooded, or drinking hot water; and I don't doubt that you have dismissed your share of them: if you have any thing to say against Doctor Sangrado, commit it to paper, he will answer it, and we shall soon see on which side the laughers are."—"By St. Jago and St. Dennis! (cried he in a rage) you are little acquainted with Doctor Cuchillo! Know, friend, that I have both

teeth and nails, and am not at all afraid of Sangrado, who, in spite of his vanity and presumption, is a downright ninny." The appearance of the little doctor making me despise his wrath, I replied with great bitterness; he answered in the same manner, and we came to fisticuffs in a very short time: some blows passed, and each of us lost an handful of hair before the grocer and his kinsman could part us: which when they had accomplished, I was paid for my visit and dismissed, while they retained my antagonist, who seemed to them the more skilful of the two.

After this adventure, I had like to have met with another as bad: for going to visit a fat chanter who was ill of a fever, I no sooner mentioned hot water, than he fell into a rage against the specific, cursed and swore, called me a thousand names, and even threatened to throw me out of the window. I moved off faster than I came in, and not choosing to see any more patients that day, betook myself to the house appointed for the rendezvous between me and Fabricius, who was already there: and as we found ourselves in a frolicsome humour, we drank hard, and went home in a state of elevation—that is, half seas over.

Signor Sangrado did not observe that I was drunk, because he mistook my extravagant gestures in recounting the quarrel I had with the little doctor, for an effect of the emotion occasioned by the battle: besides, having been principally concerned in our dispute, he became a party, and piqued at Cuchillo, said, "Thou hast done well, Gil Blas, in defending the honour of our remedies against that little abortion of the faculty. He affirms then, that aqueous draughts are improper for the dropsy! Ignorant wretch! I maintain—I do—that a dropsical patient cannot drink too much. Yes, water (added he) can cure all kinds of dropsies, as well as rheumatisms, and the green-sickness; it is moreover excellent in fevers where the

patient burns and shivers at the same time: and of incredible effect even in those distempers that are imputed to cold, serous, and phlegmatic humours: this opinion may appear strange to such raw physicians as Cuchillo; but it is easily supported by theory and practice, and if such as he were capable of reasoning philosophically, instead of decrying my method, they would become my most zealous partizans."

He did not therefore suspect my being fuddled, so much was he enraged; for, in order to inflame him the more against the little doctor, I had thrown into my story some circumstances of my own invention. Nevertheless, fired as he was with what I had told him, he perceived that I drank more water that evening than usual, the wine having made me very thirsty. Any other than Sangrado would have suspected my extraordinary drought, and the great draughts I swallowed; but he firmly believed that I began to relish watery potions; and said, with a smile, "I see, Gil Blas, thou hast no longer an aversion to water. Heaven be praised! thou drinkest it now like nectar. A change that does not surprise me at all, my friend; for I knew that it would soon grow familiar to thy taste."—"Sir, (I replied) there is a time for all things: I would not at present give a pint of water for an hogshead of wine." The doctor, charmed with this answer, did not neglect such a fair opportunity of extolling the excellence of water; but uttered a new eulogium on it, not like a cold advocate, but with all the fervour of an enthusiast. "A thousand times (cried he) a thousand and ten thousand times more valuable and innocent than the taverns of our days were those baths of ages past, into which people did not go to prostitute in a shameful manner their lives and fortunes by glutting themselves with wine; but where people met for amusement, and drank hot water with honour and security! One cannot enough admire the wise

provision of those masters of civil life, who established public places where water was freely given to all comers, and who secured the wine in the shops of apothecaries, permitting it to be used by the prescriptions of physicians only. What surprising sagacity! It is doubtless (added he) owing to some lucky remains of that ancient frugality, worthy of the golden age, that there are still a few who, like thou and I, drink nothing but water; and, who as a preservative from, or cure of all distempers, trust to hot water unboiled: for I have observed that boiled water is more heavy and less agreeable to the stomach."

While he uttered this eloquent harangue, I had like to have laughed in his face more than once: I kept my gravity however. I did more.—I entered into the doctor's sentiments, inveighed against the use of wine, and lamented that mankind had contracted a taste for such a pernicious liquor. Then (as my thirst was not sufficiently quenched) I filled a large goblet with water, and having swallowed long draughts of it, "Come, sir, (said I to my master) let us regale ourselves with this benevolent liquor, and revive in your house those ancient baths which you regret so much." He applauded my zeal, and during a whole quarter of an hour, exhorted me to drink nothing but water. In order to familiarise myself to this prescription, I promised to swallow a great quantity every evening; and that I might the more easily perform my promise, went to bed with a resolution of going to the tavern every day.

The opposition I met with at the grocer's house did not deter me from prescribing warm water and bleeding, next day. As I came out of a house where I had been to visit a frantic poet, I met an old woman in the street, who accosting me, asked, if I was a physician; when I answered in the affirmative, "Well then (said she) I most humbly beg you will come along with me; my niece was yester-

day taken ill, and I don't know what is the matter with her." I followed the old gentlewoman, who conducted me to a house, and introduced me to a pretty neat chamber, where I found a person in bed, and going towards her, in order to enquire into the symptoms of her disease, was immediately struck with her features, which when I had observed some minutes, I recollected her to be no other than the female adventurer who had so dexterously acted the part of Camilla. As for her part, she did not seem to remember me; whether the oppression of her own distemper, or my physical garb, secured me from her recollection.—Laying hold of her arm, in order to feel the pulse, I perceived the ring upon her finger; at sight of which I felt a terrible emotion, and a violent desire of attempting to retrieve it: but considering that the women might fall a crying, and Don Raphael, or some other champion of the fair sex, come to their assistance, I was at pains to resist the temptation, and imagining it would be better to dissemble, and take the advice of Fabricius, stuck to this last resolution. In the mean time the old woman pressing me to let her know the nature of her niece's distemper, I was not fool enough to own myself ignorant of the matter; but, on the contrary, affecting the man of skill, and copying my master's deportment, I told her, with great gravity, that the distemper proceeded from the patient's want of perspiration, and that, of consequence, she must be speedily blooded, that evacuation being the only substitute of perspiration: I likewise prescribed warm water, that the rules of our practice might be exactly observed.

Having made my visit as short as possible, I ran to find the son of Nunnez, whom I met at the door, going out to execute a commission for his master: I told him my new adventure, asking, if he thought I should cause Camilla to be arrested in course of law? He answered, "Not at all. That is not the way to see thy ring again; for the officers

of justice hate to make restitution. Remember the jail of Astorga, where thy horse, money, and even thy clothes were detained by these harpies. We must rather make use of our own industry in recovering thy jewel: I'll undertake to find out some stratagem for that purpose, and I will think of it in my way to the hospital, where I carry a short message to the steward, from my master: go and wait for me at our tavern, and be not impatient, for I will be with thee in a very little time."

He did not, however, arrive at the rendezvous, till after I had been there three hours; and then so disguised, that at first I did not know him: for he changed his dress, twisted his hair into a queue, covered one half of his face with a pair of artificial whiskers, provided himself with a huge sword, the hilt of which was at least three feet in circumference; and marched at the head of five men who looked as fierce as himself, and wore also long rapiers and thick mustachios. "Your servant, Signor Gil Blas (said he, accosting me) you see in me an alguazil of a new stamp, and in these brave fellows who accompany me, soldiers of the same model. Show us only the house of the woman who stole your diamond, and be assured that we will make her restore it in a twinkling." I embraced Fabricius at this discourse, which explained the stratagem he intended to put in practice in my behalf; and assured him that I very much approved of his expedient. I saluted also the false soldiers, who were three valets, and two journeymen barbers of his acquaintance, whom he had engaged to act this part. Having treated the whole brigade with wine, we went all together, in the twilight, to Camilla's lodgings, and knocked at the door, which the old woman opening, and taking my attendants for the terriers of justice, who never entered that house without cause, was seized with consternation. "Courage, good mother, (said Fabricius to her) we are come hither only on account of a small

affair that will soon be determined." So saying, we advanced to the chamber of the sick person, conducted by the old woman, who walked before, lighting us with a wax taper in a silver candlestick. Taking the candle in my hand, I went towards the bed, and discovering my face to Camilla, "Perfidious woman! (said I) behold the too credulous Gil Blas, whom you have tricked. Ah wretch! I have found you at last, and the corregidor, in consequence of my information, has ordered this alguasil to apprehend you. Come, Mr. Tipstaff (said I to Fabricius) do your office."—"There is no occasion (answered he, raising his voice) for exhorting me to do my duty. I remember that there creature, who has been a long time marked in my memorandum-book, with red letters. Rise, my princess, (added he) dress yourself with all dispatch. I intend to be your usher, and conduct you to the city jail, if you think well of it."

At these words, Camilla, sick as she was, perceiving that two of his followers, with the great whiskers, were about to drag her out by force, sat up in her bed, clasped her hands in a suppliant posture, and looking at me with terror in her eyes; "Signor Gil Blas (said she) I conjure you by the chaste mother who bore you, to have pity upon me! though I am very guilty, I am still more unfortunate! don't ruin me! I will restore your ring." So saying, she took it off from her finger, and put it into my hand. But I told her, my diamond alone would not suffice: and that she must, besides, make restitution of the thousand ducats which had been stolen from me in the furnished lodging. "Oh Signor! (she replied) do not ask your ducats of me; the traitor Don Raphael, whom I have not seen since that time, carried them off the same night."—"Oho, my little darling (said Fabricius to her) you think to get out of the scrape, by denying you had any share of the booty? but you shan't be so easily quit, I assure you: your being an accom-



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GIL BLAS. VOL. 1.

CAMILLA RETURNING THE RING. | CAMILLE RESTITUE LA BAGUE.

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plice of Don Raphael is a sufficient reason for obliging you to give an account of your past life. You have, doubtless, a great many things on your conscience, and therefore you shall go to prison, if you please, and make a general confession. I will carry this old gentlewoman thither also, (added he) for I imagine she knows a great many curious stories which the corregidor will not be sorry to hear."

At these words the two women put every thing in practice to melt us, filling the chamber with cries, groans, and lamentations: while the old woman on her knees, sometimes before the alguazil, and sometimes before his attendants, endeavoured to move their compassion; Camilla implored me in the most affecting manner, to save her from the hands of justice. Upon which I pretended to relent, saying to the son of Nunnez, "Mr. Officer, since I have got my diamond, I am satisfied. I don't desire to give this poor woman any further trouble; and would not even seek the death of a sinner." "For shame! (said he) a man of your humanity would make a bad trooper: but I must acquit myself of my commission, by which I am expressly ordered to apprehend these infantas: for the corregidor wants to make an example of them." "For heaven's sake! (I replied) have some regard to entreaty, and abate a little of your severity, in consideration of the present which these ladies will offer." "Oh! that's another affair (said he;) that is what we call a figure of rhetoric well placed—Come, let us see what they have got to give me.'—"I have (said Camilla) a pearl-necklace and ear-rings of a considerable value." Here she was interrupted with—"Yes, but if they come from the Philippine isles I'll have none of them."—"You may take them, upon my word, I'll warrant them genuine," (said she;) at the same time desiring the old woman to bring a little box, out of which she took the necklace and ear-rings, and put them into

the alguazil's hand. Though he knew no more of jewels than I did, he was persuaded that the diamonds of the ear-rings were genuine, as well as the pearls of the necklace; therefore having examined them attentively, "These jewels (said he) seem to be of good water, and provided the silver candlestick, which Signor Gil Blas has in his hand, be added to them, I won't answer for my fidelity." "I don't believe (said I to Camilla) that you will for a trifle break off a treaty so much to your advantage." So saying I gave the light to the old woman, and the candlestick to Fabricius, who being satisfied with what he had got, because (perhaps) he saw nothing else in the room which he could easily carry off, said to the ladies, "Adieu, my princesses; live in peace. I will speak to the corregidor, and represent you whiter than snow: for such as we can give what turn we please to things, and never tell him the plain truth, except when we are under no temptation to lie."

CHAPTER V.

After having in this manner executed the scheme of Fabricius, we left Camilla's lodgings, congratulating ourselves upon a piece of success that even surpassed our expectation; for we had laid our account with recovering the ring only. However, we carried off the rest without ceremony; and, far from making a scruple of robbing courtezans, we thought we had done a meritorious action.—"Gentlemen, (said Fabricius, when he had got into the street) it is my opinion that we should go back to the tavern, and spend the night in making merry. To-morrow we will sell the candlestick, necklace, and ear-rings, and share the money like

brothers; after which we will return to our several homes, and make the best excuse we can to our masters."—This proposal of the alguazil seemed very reasonable to us all: we returned to the tavern, some of us believing we could easily find an excuse for having lain abroad, and others not caring whether they should be dismissed or no.

We ordered a good supper, and sat down to table with as much appetite as good humour. The repast was seasoned with a thousand agreeable sallies; and Fabricius, in particular, enlivened the conversation, and diverted us all extremely, by innumerable strokes replete with Castilian salt, which is equal at least to the ancient Attic.—But while we were in this joyful disposition, our mirth was all of a sudden overcast by an unforeseen accident. A man of a pretty good mien entered the room where we were at supper, followed by two others of terrible aspect; after these three ore appeared; and we counted no less than twelve who came in thus, three by three, armed with carabines, swords, and bayonets.—We soon perceived them to be the soldiers of the patrole, and it was not difficult to guess their intention; wherefore we had some thoughts at first of making resistance; but they surrounded us in an instant, and kept us in awe, as well by their numbers as their fire-arms.——"Gentlemen, (said their commander to us with a sneer) I know by what ingenious artifice you have recovered a ring from the hands of a certain she-adventurer; and, to be sure the contrivance is excellent, and richly deserves a public recompence, which you shall by no means miss.—Justice has already appointed an apartment for you in her own house, and will not fail to reward such a masterly attempt." This discourse very much disconcerted all those to whom it was addressed: our countenances changed, and we felt, in our turn, the same fear with which we had inspired Camilla. Fabricius, however, though pale

and dismayed, endeavoured to justify what we had done. "Sir, (said he) as we had no bad intention, this little trick might be forgiven."—"How the devil! (cried the commandant in a rage) do you call this a little trick? Don't you know that it is a hanging matter? For, besides that no man is allowed to do justice himself without the cognizance of the law, you have carried off a candlestick, necklace, and ear-rings that did not belong to you; and which is still worse, in order to commit that robbery, you have disguised yourselves like tipstaves. —Wretches! to dress yourselves in the habit of such honourable people to do mischief. I shall think you very lucky, if you are only sentenced to the galleys." When he had convinced us that the affair was much more serious than we at first imagined, we fell down together at his feet, and begged he would have pity on our youth. But our prayers were unregarded; and besides, he rejected a proposal we made of quitting to him the necklace, earrings, and candlestick; even my ring was refused, because I suppose it was offered before too much company.—In short, he was quite inexorable; ordered my companions to be disarmed, and carried us all together to the public jail. In our way thither one of the guard told me, that the old woman who lived with Camilla, suspecting that we were not the real foot-pads of justice, had followed us to the tavern; and there being confirmed in her opinion, had revenged herself upon us, by informing the patrole of the whole affair.

We were immediately plundered of every thing; the necklace, diamonds, and candlestick seized; as also my ring, together with the ruby of the Philippine isles, which I had unfortunately in my pocket. They did not even spare the rials which I had that day received for my prescriptions; which was a sure sign to me that the people belonging to justice at Valladolid are as expert in their office as those at Astorga, and that the manners of all these gen-

tlemen are every where alike. While I was rifled of my jewels and cash, the officer of the patrole recounted our adventure to these agents of the plunder; and the affair seemed to them of such a serious nature, that the majority thought we deserved a halter: but others less severe imagined we might get off for two hundred lashes each, and a few years service in the galleys.—Until the corregidor should think proper to decide our affair, we were locked up in a dungeon, where we lay upon straw, with which it was strewed like a stable littered for horses.—Here we might have remained long enough, and at last exchanged our habitation for the galleys, had not Signor Manuel Ordonnez next day heard of our misfortune, and resolved to procure the liberty of Fabricius, which he could not do without obtaining also the dismission of us all. Being a man very much esteemed in the city, he did not spare solicitations, and partly by his own credit, and partly by that of his friends, at the end of three days effected our enlargement. But we did not come out as we had gone in; the candlestick, necklace, and ear-rings, my ring, ruby, and rials being detained: which made me remember those verses of Virgil, that begin with "Sic vos non vobis."

As soon as we were set at liberty we returned to our masters; and Doctor Sangrado received me very kindly, saying, "My poor Gil Blas, I did not hear of thy misfortune till this morning, and was just going to make strong solicitations in thy behalf. Thou must console thyself, my friend, for this accident, and attach thyself more than ever to physic."—"That is my design," (said I.) And truly I thought of nothing else. Far from wanting business, it happened, as my master had foretold, that distempers were very rife, the small pox and putrid fever beginning to ravage the city and suburbs; so that all the physicians in Valladolid, and we in particular, had abundance of practice.—Scarce a day

passed in which we did not visit eight or ten patients, each; from whence it may be easily conceived what a quantity of blood was spilt and water drank. But, I do not know how it happened, all our sick died either on account of our mal-practice, or because their diseases were incurable.—Certain it is, we very seldom had occasion to make three visits to one patient: at the second, we were either told that he was just going to be buried, or found him at the last gasp; and as I was but a young physician, who had not yet time to be inured to murder, I began to be very uneasy at the fatal events which might be laid to my charge.—"Sir, (said I, one evening, to Dr. Sangrado) I take heaven to witness that I follow your method with the utmost exactness; yet, nevertheless, every one of my patients leaves me in the lurch. It looks as if they took a pleasure in dying, merely to bring our practice into discredit. This very day I met two of them going to their long home."—"Why truly, child (answered he) I have reason to make pretty much the same observation: I have not often the satisfaction of curing those who fall into my hands; and if I was not so sure as I am of the principles on which I proceed, I should think my remedies were pernicious in almost all the cases that come under my care."—"If you will take my advice, sir, (said I) we will change our method, and give chemical preparations to our patients, through curiosity; the worst that can happen will only be, that they produce the same effect that follows our bleedings and warm water."—"I would willingly make that experiment (he replied) provided it could have no bad consequence; but I have published a book, in which I have extolled the use of frequent bleeding and aqueous draughts: and wouldst thou have me go and decry my own work?"—"Oh! you are certainly in the right (said I) you must not give your enemies such a triumph over you: they would say you are at last disabused; and therefore ruin your

reputation: perish rather the nobility, clergy, and people! and let us continue in our old path. After all, our brother doctors, notwithstanding their aversion for bleeding, perform as few miracles as we do; and I believe their drugs are no better than our specifics."

We went to work, therefore, afresh, and proceeded in such a manner, that in less than six weeks we made more widows and orphans than the siege of Troy. By the number of burials, one would have thought that the plague was in Valladolid; and every day, some father came to our house to demand an account of his son, whom we had ravished from him, or some uncle, to upbraid us with his nephew's death. As for the sons and nephews, whose fathers and uncles we had dispatched, they never appeared to complain: the husbands too were very civil, and never cavilled with us about the loss of their wives. But those afflicted people, whose reproaches we were obliged to undergo, were sometimes very brutal in their grief, and called us ignorant assassins. As they did not spare me, in particular, I was afflicted by their epithets: but my master, who was used to such accidents, heard them without the least emotion. I might, perhaps, in time, have been accustomed to reproach, as well as he, if Heaven, doubtless to rid the sick people in Valladolid of one of their most severe scourges, had not produced an occasion that gave me a disgust to physic, which I practised with so little success.

There was in our neighbourhood a tennis-court, to which the idle people in town daily resorted, and, among the rest, one of your professed bullies, who take upon themselves the office of arbiters, and decide all differences that happen. He was from Biscay, his name Don Rodrigo de Mondragon, about thirty years of age, of an ordinary make, but lean and muscular; he had two little twinkling eyes, that rolled in his head, and threatened every

body he looked at; a very flat nose, placed between red whiskers, that curled up to his very temples, and a manner of speaking so rough and passionate, that his words struck terror into every body. This racket-breaker had made himself tyrant of the tennis-court, where he judged all the disputes that happened among those who played in the most imperious manner, and no man durst appeal from his decision, unless he could resolve to fight him next day. Such as I have described Don Rodrigo, who, notwithstanding the Don he had prefixed to his name, was an arrant rascal, he captivated the mistress of the tennis-court, who was a woman about forty years of age, rich and agreeable enough, and in the fifteenth month of her widowhood. I know not how he won her heart; for doubtless it was not by his beauty; but surely, by that je ne scai quoi which cannot be expressed. Be that as it will, she had a passion for him, and actually designed to take him for her husband; but while preparations were making for the consummation of that affair, she fell sick, and unhappily employed me as her physician. If her distemper had not been a malignant fever, my prescriptions were sufficient to endanger her life; so that in four days I filled the tennis-court with mourning: the mistress went the way of all my patients, and her relations took possession of her estate. Don Rodrigo, made desperate by the loss of his mistress, or rather by being balked in his expectation of a very advantageous match, not only cursed and reviled me, but also swore that he would run me through the body whenever he could catch me, and exterminate me from the face of the earth. A charitable neighbour informed me of this oath, and advised me not to stir abroad, for fear of meeting this devil of a man. This advice, which I had no intention to neglect, filled me with confusion and dismay: I fancied incessantly, that I saw this furious Biscayan coming into the house; and could not enjoy one mo-

ment's repose. This effectually detached me from physic, and my sole care was how to free myself from disquiet: I resumed my embroidered suit, and after having bid adieu to my master, who could not persuade me to stay, quitted the city at day-break, not without apprehension of meeting Don Rodrigo in my way.

CHAPTER VI.

I WALKED very fast, looking behind me from time to time, to see if this formidable Biscayan was not at my heels; my imagination being so much possessed by that fellow, that I took every tree or bush I saw for him; and every moment felt my heart throb with fear. I plucked up my courage however when I had got a good league, and continued at an easier pace my journey towards Madrid, whither my purpose was to go. I should have quitted Valladolid without regret, had I not been sorry to part from Fabricius, my dear Pylades, to whom I could not so much as bid adieu: but it gave me no mortification to renounce physic: on the contrary I begged pardon of God, for having exercised it at all; though I did not fail to count, with pleasure, the money I had in my purse, notwithstanding its being the salary of my assassinations: in that respect resembling those ladies of pleasure, who reform their morals, but nevertheless keep fast hold of the wages of sin. My whole fortune amounted to pretty near the value of five ducats, in rials; on the strength of which I expected to reach Madrid, where I did not doubt of finding some good place: besides, I longed passionately to see that august city, which had been extolled to me as the epitome of all the wonders of the world.

While I recollected all that I had heard in its praise, and enjoyed its pleasures by anticipation, I heard the voice of a man behind me, singing at full stretch: he had a leathern wallet on his back, a guitar hanging about his neck, a long sword by his side, and walked so fast, that he was up with me in a very short time. Being one of the two journeymen barbers, with whom I had been imprisoned in the adventure of the ring, we knew one another immediately, though our dress was altered, and were very much surprised at meeting so unexpectedly on the highway. I assured him that I was extremely glad to have him for a fellow-traveller, and his joy seemed no less at meeting with me. I told him my reasons for quitting Valladolid; and he reposed the same confidence in me, by letting me know that he had quarrelled with his master, and bid him an eternal adieu. "If I had been inclined (added he) to live any longer in Valladolid, I could have found employment in abundance of shops: for, without vanity, I can handle a razor, and curl a mustachio, as well as e'er a barber in Spain, but I could no longer resist the violent desire I had to visit the place of my nativity, from which I have been absent these ten years: I want to breathe my own country air a little, and know the situation of my family, with whom I hope to be in two days; for they live at a place called Olmedo, a market-town on this side of Segovia."

Resolving to accompany this barber to his own home, and from thence go to Segovia, in order to take the opportunity of some convenience to Madrid, we pursued our journey, and discoursed of indifferent subjects. He was a young fellow of some wit and humour: and when we had conversed together an hour, he asked how my stomach was disposed: I answered, that he should see at the first inn. Upon which he said, "We had better make a pause in the mean time: I have something for breakfast in my wallet; for when I travel, I

always take care to have provision along with me: I don't trouble myself with clothes, linen, and other useless baggage; but resolving to have nothing superfluous, fill my knapsack with belly-timber, my razors, and a wash-ball." I commended his prudence, and consented, with all my heart, to the pause he proposed: for I was hungry, and resolved to make a good meal, which I could not but expect, after what he had told me. We turned a little out of the highway, in order to sit upon the grass, where my friend the barber took out his victuals, consisting of five or six onions, with a few crusts of bread and cheese; but what he produced as the best furniture in his budget, was a little bottle full (as he said) of delicate wine. Though our dishes were not very savoury, hunger, being very urgent to us both, made them relish pretty well; and we emptied the bottle, which contained about two pints of a sort of wine that I don't choose to boast much of: after which we got up, and continued our journey with great good humour. The barber, who had been informed by Fabricius that I had met with some very particular adventures, desired to hear them from my own mouth; a satisfaction I could not refuse to a man who had regaled me so sumptuously. When I had gratified his curiosity, I told him he could do no less, in return for my complaisance, than recount the story of his own life. "Oh! as for my story (cried he) it is not worth hearing, as it contains nothing but ordinary facts: nevertheless (added he) since we have nothing else to do, you shall hear it, such as it is." So saying he related it, nearly in these words.

CHAPTER VII.

FERDINAND Peres de la Fuenta, my grandfather, (I go to the fountain-head) after having been fifty years barber in the village of Olmedo, died, and left four sons, the eldest of whom took possession of his shop, and succeeded him in the business: Bertrand, the second, having an inclination for trade, became a mercer; Thomas, who was the third, kept a school; and the fourth, whose name was Pedro, feeling himself born for the belles lettres, sold a little lot of ground which he had for his patrimony, and went to live at Madrid, where he hoped one day to distinguish himself by his wit and learning; while his three brothers did not separate, but settling at Olmedo, married the daughters of husbandmen, who, in lieu of fortune, brought them abundance of children, breeding as if it had been for a wager. My mother, the barber's wife, brought six into the world, for her share, in the first five years of her marriage, of which number I am one. My father taught me betimes to shave, and when I arrived at the age of fifteen put this wallet upon my shoulders, and girding me with a long sword, said, "Go, Diego, thou art now in a condition to gain a livelihood: go and see the world: thou hast occasion for a little travelling to rub thee up, and make thee perfect in thy business. March, and don't return to Olmedo before thou hast made a tour of Spain. Let me not hear from thee until this be performed." At these words he embraced me very affectionately, and turned me out of doors.

Such was the behaviour of my father at parting with me. But my mother, whose manners were not quite so rough, seemed more affected on this occasion: she let fall some tears, and even slipped

a ducat privately into my hand. So I quitted Olmedo, and took the road to Segovia; of which, however, I had not walked above two hundred paces, when I stopped to examine my knapsack, being desirous of seeing what it contained, and of knowing precisely the extent of my possession. I found a case and two razors, so much wore, that they seemed to have shaved two generations, with a thong of leather to set them, and a lump of soap: besides, there was a canvas shirt quite new, an old pair of my father's shoes, and what gave me more pleasure than all the rest, twenty rials wrapped in a linen rag. This was my whole fortune, by which you may conclude, that master Nicholas the barber relied a good deal on my skill, since he sent me away so poorly provided. Nevertheless, the possession of a ducat and twenty rials did not fail to charm a young fellow like me, who had never before been master of coin: I believed my funds were inexhaustible, and continued my journey in a transport of joy, admiring, every moment, the hilt of my sword, which thumped against my hams, or got between my legs, at every step.

Arriving at the village of Ataquines in the evening, very sharp set, I went to lodge at an inn, and, as if I had been a man of fortune, called for supper with an air of authority: the landlord having surveyed me some time, and seeing who he had to do with, said, in a very obliging manner, "Master, you shall be satisfied; we will treat you like a prince." So saying, he showed me into a little room; where, in a quarter of an hour, they brought me a ragout made of ram cat, which I ate as greedily as if it had been composed of a rabbit or hare. This excellent dish was accompanied with wine, so good, as he said, that the king himself could not drink better. Notwithstanding this eulogium, I perceived it was cursedly sour; but this did not hinder me from doing as much honour to it, as I had already done to the ragout; and, to

complete the treatment of a prince, I was conducted to a couch more proper for encouraging watchfulness than sleep; being a truckle-bed, so narrow and short, that, little as I was, I had no room to lie in it with my legs extended: besides, instead of a mattress and feather-bed, it had only a wretched flock-bed, covered with a doubled sheet, which had served an hundred different travellers at least since the last washing. Nevertheless, in such a convenience, my stomach full of ragout, and that delicious wine which the landlord had recommended, thanks to my youth and constitution, I enjoyed a sound sleep, and spent the night without indigestion.

Next day, after having breakfasted, and paid sauce for my good cheer, I made but one stage to Segovia; and, on my first arrival, had the good fortune to be employed in a shop for my board and lodging: here, however, I stayed but six months; being seduced by a brother journeyman of my acquaintance, who longed to see Madrid, and with whom I set out for that city. There I got a place on the same terms as at Segovia, in a well-accustomed shop, much frequented on account of the neighbourhood of the church of Santa Cruz and the prince's theatre; my master, two journeymen, and I, being scarce sufficient to trim all our customers, who consisted of people of all ranks, and, among others, of players and authors. One day two persons of the last profession, being there together, began to discourse about the poetry and poets of the time, and hearing them mention the name of my uncle, I listened to their conversation with great attention. "Don Juan de Zavaleta (said one of them) is an author, in my opinion, beneath the public notice: a cold genius, a man without fancy: his last piece has done him infinite prejudice." "And pray (said the other) has ever Lewis Valez de Guevara produced a good work? Was ever any thing more wretched than his per-

formances?" They named a great many more poets, whom I have forgot. I remember only that they spoke contemptuously of them all except my uncle, of whom they made honourable mention, agreeing that he was a lad of merit. "Yes, (said one of them) Don Pedro de la Fuenta is an excellent writer: his books contain a delicate raillery mixed with erudition, which makes them agreeably satirical; and I am not at all surprised at his being esteemed by the court and city, or at his receiving salaries from several grandees."—"He has, indeed (said the other) enjoyed a pretty large income these many years; and, as he lives with the Duke of Medina Celi, and spends little, must be worth a considerable sum of money."

I did not lose one word which the poet said concerning my uncle, who, we had heard in the family, made a noise in Madrid by his works, some people travelling through Olmedo having told us so; but as he neglected to let us hear from him, and seemed quite detached from his relations, we, on our part, lived with as great indifference towards him. True blood is, however, always guided by a sure instinct: as soon as I heard that he was in good circumstances, and knew where he lodged, I was tempted to wait upon him: though one thing embarrassed me not a little; his being called Don Pedro by the authors. That don gave me some uneasiness, and I was afraid he might be some other poet than my uncle. I was not, however, stopped by this consideration; but imagined that he might have been ennobled on account of his wit, and therefore resolved to go and see him. For this purpose, with my master's permission, I dressed myself one morning as well as I could, and went out of the shop, not a little proud of being nephew to a man who had acquired such reputation by his genius. As the barbers are not the least vain people in the world, I began to conceive a great opinion of myself, and strutting with an

haughty air, enquired for the house of the Duke de Medina Celi, where, presenting myself at the gate, and saying I wanted to speak with Don Pedro de la Fuenta, the porter pointed with his finger to a little stair-case at the further end of a court, which he bid me ascend, and knock at the first door on my right hand: I did so, and (a young man coming out) asked if Signor Don Pedro de la Fuenta lodged there. "Yes, (said he) but you cannot see him at present."—"I should be very glad (I replied) to speak with him; for I bring him news of his family."—"If you could bring him news of the pope (said he) I would not introduce you to his chamber just now; for he is composing; and when that is the case, we must take care not to disturb his imagination: he will not be visible till noon, so that you may go and take a turn, and come back about that time."

I took his advice, and walked through the city the whole morning, thinking continually on the reception I should meet with from my uncle, who I imagined would be extremely glad to see me: I judged of his sentiments by my own, and preparing myself for a very tender scene, returned to his lodgings, with all diligence, at the hour prescribed. "You are come in the very nick of time (said his valet) for my master is just going out: stay here a minute, and I will let him know you are come." So saying, he left me in an outward room, and returning in a moment conducted me into the chamber of his master, whose face had so much of our family air in it, that I was struck with the resemblance, and could not help thinking it was my very uncle Thomas whom I had left at home. Having saluted him with profound respect, I told him I was the son of master Nicholas de la Fuenta, barber in Olmedo; that I had worked at my father's business these three weeks at Madrid, in quality of a journeyman; and that I intended to make the tour of Spain for my improvement. While I spoke,

my uncle seemed to muse, considering, in all likelihood, whether he should disown me for his nephew, or get rid of me in a more dexterous manner. He chose this last method, and, affecting a smiling air, said, "Well, my friend, how do thy father and uncles? I hope they are in good circumstances." Upon this I began to describe the plentiful propagation of our family; I told him the names of all the children, male and female, and even comprehended in that list their godfathers and godmothers. He did not seem to interest himself infinitely in my detail, but coming to his purpose, replied, "Diego, I approve very much of thy resolution to travel, in order to make thee perfect in thy profession; and I advise thee to leave Madrid as soon as possible; it is a pernicious place for youth, in which thou wilt be ruined, my child. It will be more for thy advantage to reside in some of the other cities of the kingdom, where people's morals are not so much corrupted. Go, (added he) and, when thou art ready to set out, come and see me again; I will give thee a pistole to help thee to make the tour of Spain." With these words, he pushed me gently out of his chamber, and sent me about my business.

I had not sense enough to perceive that he wanted to remove me at a good distance from him; but, going to our shop, gave my master an account of what had passed: he was as far from discovering the intention of Signor Don Pedro as I was, and said, "I am not at all of your uncle's opinion: instead of advising you to travel, he ought rather, I think, to make it your interest to stay in this city; for, being intimate with so many persons of quality, he can easily settle you in some great family, and put you in a condition to make your fortune." Struck with this discourse, which flattered my imagination, in two days I went back to my uncle, and proposed that he should employ his credit to procure admission for me into the family

of some lord belonging to the court. But this proposal was not at all to his liking: a vain man like him, who had free access to the great, and eat every day at their tables, could not brook his nephew's sitting with the servants, while he dined with their lords; in this case, little Diego would have made Signor Don Pedro blush. He did not fail, therefore, to refuse my request, and that not in the most civil manner. "How! you little vagabond, (said he with a furious look,) wouldst thou quit thy profession? Go, I abandon thee to those who have given thee such pernicious counsel: get out of my apartment, and never set foot in it again, otherwise I will cause thee to be chastised as thou deservest." Confounded at these words, and still more at the tone in which they were delivered, I retired, with the tear in my eye, very much affected at this harsh behaviour: but as I was naturally brisk and haughty, I soon dried my tears; my grief changed to indignation, and I resolved to take no further notice of this unkind relation, without whose assistance I had hitherto made shift to live.

My whole thought being now bent on cultivating my talent, I applied to business, shaved all day long, and in the evening learned to play on the guitar by way of recreation. My master for that instrument was an old Signor Escudero,* whose beard I trimmed, and who taught me music, which he understood perfectly well, having been formerly chorister in a cathedral. His name was Marcos de Obregon, a sage person, who had a large stock of sense as well as experience, and loved me as well as if I had been his own child. He served in quality of usher to a physician's wife, who lived within thirty paces of our house, whither I used to go in the twilight, when we had left off working: and sitting together on the threshold of the door, we used to make a little concert, not at all disagree-

* Escudero: a squire to wait on a gentlewoman.

able to the neighbours: not that our voices were exquisite, but while we thrummed upon the instrument, each of us, in our turn, accompanied it with singing, and that was sufficient to please our audience. In particular, we diverted Donna Mergellina, the physician's wife, who used to come into the passage to hear us, and sometimes made us repeat the airs that were most to her liking, her husband not being offended at her enjoying this diversion; for though he was a Spaniard, and already well stricken in years, he was not jealous: his profession engrossed him wholly, and as he returned fatigued from his patients in the evening, he went to bed betimes, without being alarmed at his wife's attention to our concerts: 'tis probable, indeed, that he did not think them capable of making dangerous impressions: and we must observe, that he imagined he had little or no cause to fear; Mergellina being young and handsome 'tis true, but withal so savagely virtuous, that she could not so much as endure the look of a man. He did not, therefore, begrudge her a pastime that seemed so innocent and honourable, but left us to sing as much as we pleased. One evening when I came to the physician's door, with an intention to play as usual, I found the old squire expecting me, who taking me by the hand, said he wanted to take a turn with me before we should begin our concert; then leading me into a by-street where we found we could talk with freedom, "Son Diego (said he, with a melancholy air) I have something extraordinary to disclose: I am afraid, my child, that we both shall have cause to repent of amusing ourselves in the evening with concerts at my master's door. I have, doubtless, a great friendship for you, and am very well pleased with having taught you to play upon the guitar and sing; but had I foreseen the misfortune that threatens us, please God! I would have given you your lessons in some other place!" Frightened at this discourse, I begged the usher to

be more explicit, and tell me what we had to fear; for I was not a man who could brave danger; nor had I, as yet, made the tour of Spain. "I will (said he) tell you what is necessary to be known, that you may comprehend the jeopardy in which we are. When I entered into the service of the physician, which is about a year ago, he said to me one morning, after having brought me into the presence of his wife, 'Marcos, behold your mistress: this is the lady whom you are to tend everywhere.' I admired Donna Mergellina. I thought her wonderful pretty, excessively handsome, and was particularly charmed with the agreeable air that diffused itself through her whole mien: 'Sir, (answered I to the physician) I am too happy in being permitted to serve such a charming lady.' Mergellina, disgusted at my answer, said in a passion, 'A pretty fellow, indeed! methinks you take a great deal of liberty.—I want none of your compliments—not I.' Such words, from a mouth so agreeable, surprised me very much; I could not reconcile this rustic and insolent manner of speaking with the gentle appearance of my mistress: but her husband, who was used to it, rejoiced at his having a wife of such a rare character, told me that his spouse was a prodigy of virtue; and perceiving that she put on her veil, and prepared to go to mass, bade me conduct her to church. We were no sooner in the street, than we met (which is not at all extraordinary) several gentlemen, who, struck with the fine air of Donna Mergellina, paid her a great many compliments en passant. She replied to them all; but you cannot imagine how silly and ridiculous her answers were. Every body was astonished, and could not conceive that there was a woman in the world who could be displeased with praise. 'Madam (said I to her) take no notice of what is said to you; it is better to keep silence, than to speak in passion.'—'No, no (answered she) I will let these insolent fellows know that I won't

be treated with disrespect.' In short, so much impertinence escaped her, that I could not help telling her my sentiments, at the hazard of her displeasure. I represented to her, as delicately as I could, that she perverted nature, and spoiled a thousand good qualities by her savage humour; that a woman of politeness and good nature might inspire love without the help of beauty; whereas, the handsomest person in the world, without meekness and good breeding, would become the object of contempt. I strengthened these arguments with many more of the same kind, calculated for the reformation of her behaviour; and after having moralized a good deal, I was afraid that my freedom would enrage my mistress, and bring upon me some severe repartee: nevertheless, she did not rebel against my remonstrance, but contented herself with neglecting it entirely, as well as all the rest that I was afterwards foolish enough to make.

"At length I forbore to advise her of her faults, and abandoned her to the ferocity of her nature. Meanwhile (would you believe it?) the ferocious disposition of this haughty woman is, within these two months, entirely changed; she is complaisant to every body, and her behaviour most agreeable; she is not the same Mergellina who made such silly answers to the men that said obliging things to her; she is become sensible to praise; loves to be called handsome, and told that a man cannot look upon her with impunity; and flattery is now as agreeable to her as to any other woman: the change is scarce credible; and, what will surprise you still more, you are the author of such a great miracle! Yes, my dear Diego (continued the usher) you have metamorphosed Donna Mergellina in this manner, and converted that tigress into a lamb. In one word, you have attracted her notice: I have perceived it more than once, and I am very much mistaken in the sex if she has not conceived a most violent passion for

you. This, my child, is the sad piece of news I had to disclose, and the troublesome dilemma in which we are."

"I can't see (said I to the old man) that we have so much cause to be afflicted at this affair, or that it is a misfortune for me to be beloved by a handsome lady."—"Ah, Diego! (he replied) you talk like a young man: you look only at the bait, without perceiving the hook; you consider only the pleasure, but I foresee the disagreeable consequences. All will come to light in the end. If you continue coming to sing at our door, you will inflame the passion of Mergellina, who, perhaps, losing all restraint, will betray her weakness before her husband Doctor Oloroso; and he who appears so complaisant at present, because he believes he has no reason to be jealous, will become furious, revenge himself upon her, and, in all probability, make both you and me feel the effects of his rage."—"Why, truly (said I) Signor Marcos, your reasons are convincing, and I submit myself wholly to your advice: give me, therefore, directions how to behave in order to prevent mischief."—"We have nothing to do (answered he) but to give over our concert: appear no more before my mistress; and, when you are no longer seen, she will retrieve her quiet. Stay at your master's house, whither I will come, and we will play upon the guitar without danger."—"With all my heart (said I) and I promise never to set foot within your door again." I resolved, in good earnest, to be as good as my word, and, for the future, to keep myself close in the shop, since the sight of me was so dangerous.

In the mean time honest Marcos, with all his prudence, found, in a very few days, that the means he had contrived to extinguish the flame of Donna Mergellina produced a quite contrary effect. The lady, not having heard me sing for two nights successively, asked him why we had discontinued our concert, and for what reason I no longer ap-

peared? He replied, I was so busy that I had not a moment to bestow on my pleasures. She seemed satisfied with this excuse, and for three days more supported my absence with fortitude enough; but, at the end of that time, my princess lost all patience, and said to her squire, "You deceive me, Marcos; Diego must have some other reason for not coming hither: there is some mystery in it, which I must have explained: speak, therefore, I order you, and conceal nothing of the truth."—"Madam, (answered he, making use of another expedient) since you must know the truth, I will tell you, that he commonly found supper over when he went home, after our concert; and he does not choose to run the risk of going to bed with an empty stomach."—"How! with an empty stomach? (cried she with marks of uneasiness) why had not you told me this sooner? Go to bed supperless! poor baby! Go to him instantly, and bring him hither this evening. He sha'nt go home with an empty stomach: there shall always be a plate of something reserved for him."

"What do I hear? (said the usher, affecting surprise at her discourse,) Heavens, what a change! Is it you, madam, that talk thus? How long have you been thus gentle and compassionate?"—"How long! (replied she, hastily) since your abode in this house; or rather since you condemned my disdainful carriage, and laboured to soften the roughness of my behaviour. But, alas! (added she, in a melting strain) I have passed from one extremity to another! from being haughty and insensible, I am become too soft and tender! I love your young friend Diego, in spite of all my efforts to the contrary; and his absence, instead of weakening, adds new vigour to my love!"—"Is it possible (said the old man) that a lad, who is neither handsome nor genteel, should be the object of such a violent passion? I would forgive your sentiments, had they been inspired by some gentle-

man of shining accomplishments."—"Ah, Marcos! (said Mergellina, interrupting him) I don't resemble the rest of my sex—or rather, notwithstanding all your long experience, you are but little acquainted with women, if you think that merit always determines their choice. If I may be allowed to judge by myself, deliberation has no share in their engagements; love is a disorder of the mind, by which we are involuntarily dragged and fastened to the object—it is a distemper by which we are seized as dogs are with madness: cease therefore to represent Diego as unworthy of my tenderness: let it suffice that my love finds in him a thousand good qualities which escape your notice, and perhaps only exist in my imagination. It is vain for you to tell me, that neither his features nor his make deserve the least attention. He seems to be born to captivate, and fairer than the day! besides, he has a sweetness of voice that charms me, and, in my opinion, plays on the guitar with a grace peculiar to himself."—"But, madam, (replied Marcos) do you consider who this Diego is? the meanness of his condition?"—"Mine is not much higher than his, (said she, interrupting him again) and if I was even a woman of quality, that should be no objection."

The result of this conversation was, that the usher, thinking he should make little progress with his remonstrances, ceased to oppose the infatuation of his mistress; as an expert pilot yields to the storm that drives him from the port in view. He did more for the satisfaction of his patroness; for coming to me, he took me aside, and having recounted what passed between her and him; "You see, Diego, (added he) that we cannot help continuing our concert at Mergellina's door. There is a necessity for that lady's seeing you again, my friend; otherwise we shall commit some piece of indiscretion, that may do infinite prejudice to her reputation." I was not hard-

nearted, but told Marcos, I would in the twilight repair to the place of assignation, with my guitar, and that he might go and regale his mistress with this agreeable piece of news. In this he did not fail; and that passionate inamorata was ravished to understand that she should have the pleasure of seeing and hearing me that very evening.

A disagreeable accident, however, had well nigh balked her expectation. For I could not leave the shop before night, which, for my sins, was extremely dark; and as I groped along the street, and had got about half way to the place of rendezvous, I was crowned, from a window, with the contents of a perfuming pan, that did not at all delight my sense of smelling; though I may safely say, I lost none of it, so exactly was I equipped. In this condition, I did not know what course to take. Had I returned to the shop, I should have afforded a very diverting scene to my comrades, and exposed myself to a thousand unsavoury jests; and I was shocked at the thought of going in this fine pickle to Mergellina: this last, however, I resolved upon, and going to the physician's house, found the old squire waiting for me at the door. When he told me that Doctor Oloroso being in bed, we might freely divert ourselves; I answered, I must first clean my clothes; and then related my misfortune: he sympathized with me, and conducted me into a hall where his mistress was, who no sooner learned my adventure, and saw my condition, than she grieved for me as much as if I had met with the greatest misfortune; and bestowed a thousand curses on the person who had thus accommodated me. "But, madam, (said Marcos to her) moderate your transports; and consider that this event, being the pure effect of chance, ought not to be so deeply resented."—"Why should not I (answered she) deeply resent the injury that has been done to this poor lamb, this dove without

gall, who does not even complain of the outrage he has received? O that I was a man this moment to revenge it!"

She said a thousand things more that denoted the excess of her love, which she made appear no less by her actions; for while Marcos was busied in wiping me with a towel, she ran to her chamber and fetched from it a box full of all sorts of perfumes; sweetening my clothes with the scent of odoriferous drugs which she burned, and afterwards sprinkling them all over with essences. The fumigation and aspersion performed, this charitable lady went herself into the kitchen for some bread, wine, and slices of roasted mutton, which she had set apart for my entertainment: and obliging me to eat, took pleasure in serving me, sometimes by cutting me victuals, and sometimes by filling wine; in spite of all that Marcos and I could say to dissuade her from such condescension. When I had supped, we gentlemen of the band began to tune our voices to our guitars, and performed a concert that charmed Mergellina. We affected, indeed, to sing those airs, the words of which flattered her passion; and it must be observed, that while I sung, I frequently ogled her with the tail of my eye in such a manner, as blew the coals of love; for I began to be pleased with the game. Although the concert lasted a long time, I was not at all tired; and as for the lady, to whom the hours seemed minutes, she would willingly have spent the night in hearing us; had not the old usher, to whom the minutes seemed hours, put her in mind of its being late. This she gave him the trouble to repeat ten or twelve times; but she had to do with one who was indefatigable on that subject, and who gave her no rest until I was gone. This experienced person, seeing his mistress abandoned to a foolish passion, was afraid of some cross accident: and his fear was soon justified: for the doctor, either suspecting some secret intrigue, or agi-

tated by the demon of jealousy, who had respected him hitherto, took it in his head to find fault with our concerts, which he forbad in a peremptory manner, and, without giving any reason for his disgust, declared that for the future he would suffer no strangers to come within his doors.

Marcos advertised me of this declaration, which was particularly intended for me, and mortified me not a little; for I had conceived hopes I was sorry to forego. Nevertheless, that I may act the faithful historian, I will own that I bore the misfortune with patience. This was not the case with Mergellina, whose sentiments were more inflamed than ever. "My dear Marcos! (said she to her usher) from you alone I expect assistance: fall upon some method, I beg of you, to bring Diego and me together in private."—"What do you ask! (cried the old man in a rage.) I have been already but too complaisant, and will not undertake, by gratifying your silly passion, to dishonour my master, ruin your reputation, and entail infamy upon myself. I, who have always maintained the character of an irreproachable domestic! I will rather quit your family than serve you in such a shameful manner."—"Ah, Marcos! (cried the lady, interrupting him, and frightened at his last words) you pierce my very heart, when you talk of leaving me! Cruel man! are you going to forsake me now, after having reduced me to this condition! Give me back my former pride, and that savageness of disposition you have deprived me of! Why do I not still possess these happy defects, which would have preserved my tranquillity: whereas your indiscreet remonstrances have robbed me of the repose I enjoyed! You have corrupted my morals by endeavouring to correct them.—But what do I say (added she) wretch that I am! why do I reproach you unjustly! No, my father, you are not the author of my misfortune, which cruel fate alone decrees! Don't therefore take notice,

I conjure you, of the extravagant discourse that escapes me! Alas! my passion disorders my understanding! Have pity on my weakness; you are all my comfort, and if you have any regard for my life, do not refuse your assistance."

At these words, her tears redoubling in such a manner that she could not go on, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and threw herself upon a chair, like a person sinking under affliction. Old Marcos, who was perhaps the best soul of an usher that ever lived, could not resist such a moving sight, which affected him so much, that he even mingled his tears with those of his mistress, and said, with an air of tenderness, "Ah, madam, how bewitching you are! I am not proof against your sorrow! My virtue is vanquished, and I promise you my assistance. I am not surprised that love has been able to make you forget your duty, when pity only has severed me from mine." Accordingly, the usher, in spite of his irreproachable conduct, devoted himself very obligingly to the passion of Mergellina, and having come one morning to inform me of what had happened, told me at parting, that he had already concerted a plan for procuring a secret interview between the lady and me. This re-animated my hope, but in less than two hours after I received a piece of very bad news. A journeyman apothecary in the neighbourhood, one of our customers, came in to be shaved, and while I prepared the lather, said, "Signor Diego, what is the matter with your friend, the old squire, Marcos de Obregon! Do you know that he is going to leave Doctor Oloroso?" Upon my answering in the negative, he resumed, "It is certainly true: he is to be dismissed this very day: his master and mine have been just talking on that subject, while I was by; and to the best of my remembrance, their conversation was thus: 'Signor Apuntador (said the physician) I have a favour to ask: being dissatisfied with an old usher who has served me

some time, I want to put my wife under the direction of a faithful, severe, and vigilant duenna.' —'I understand you, (said my master, interrupting him) you have occasion for Dame Melancia, who was my wife's governante, and has lived in the family these six weeks that I have been a widower: though she is very useful to me in housekeeping, I yield her to you, on account of my concern for your honour. You may depend upon her for the safety of your forehead: she is a jewel of a duenna,* and a very dragon to guard the chastity of the female sex: during the whole term of twelve years that she was with my wife, who you know, was both young and handsome, I never saw so much as the shadow of a gallant in my house. No, faith! it was no place for them to play pranks in, and let me tell you, the defunct, in the beginning, had a strong propensity to coquetry, but Dame Melancia soon reclaimed, and inspired her with a taste for virtue. In a word, she is a treasure, and you will thank me more than once for the present I make of her.' The doctor was rejoiced at this encomium and Signor Apuntador and he are agreed, that the duenna shall this very day fill the place of the old usher."

This piece of news, which I believed, and was certainly true, disturbed the ideas of pleasure with which I had begun again to regale myself; and Marcos, in the afternoon, confounded them effectually, by confirming the report of the journeyman apothecary. "My dear Diego, (said the honest usher) I am very glad that Doctor Oloroso has dismissed me. A circumstance that spares me a great deal of trouble: for I not only found myself

* The duennas are discreet females of appoved fidelity, to whose care the Spaniards commit the chastity of their wives and daughters—an office happily excluded from this land of virtuous freedom.



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enta: when I answered, Yes.
she) you are the person I wan
to Donna Mergellina's door, a
by which you may be know
the house."—"Very well, (sa
first agree upon the signal.
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bless you—How handsome yo

went to her door, where I mewed so loud as to be heard at a good distance, and did great honour to the master who taught me such a polite art. In a moment, Mergellina herself having opened the door softly and let me in, shut it again in the same manner; and we went together into the hall where our last concert was held, and which was lighted by a small lamp that glimmered in the chimney: we sat down close by one another, for the benefit of conversing more at our ease; and were both very much affected: with this difference, however, that pleasure alone was the occasion of her emotion; while mine partook a little of fear. My princess in vain assured me, that we had nothing to dread on account of her husband; I was seized with a fit of shivering that disturbed my joy. "Madam (said I to her) how have you been able to deceive the vigilance of your governante? After what I had heard of Dame Melancia, I did not think it possible for you to find means to let me hear from you, much less to give me a personal interview." Donna Mergellina, smiling at my discourse, answered, "You will cease to be surprised at the private opportunity we now enjoy, after I have told you what passed between my duenna and me. When she came first into the family, my husband loaded her with civilities, and said to me, 'Mergellina, I commit you to the conduct of this discreet gentlewoman, who is a summary of all the virtues: a mirror which you must always have before your eyes, for your improvement in wisdom: this admirable person governed an apothecary's wife (a friend of mine) twelve years; and that in such an uncommon manner, that she became a kind of saint, under her instruction.'

"This encomium, which the severe look of Dame Melancia did not belie, cost me a world of tears, and threw me into despair. I represented to myself the lectures I must hear from morn to night, and the rebukes I must every day undergo. In

short, I expected to be the most unhappy woman in the world: and thinking it needless to be on the reserve, in such a cruel state of expectation, I said to my duenna, with a resolute air (as soon as I found myself alone with her) 'You are doubtless preparing a great many sufferings for me; but I think proper to advertise you beforehand, that I have not a great deal of patience; and that I will endeavour to give you as many mortifications as I can: in the mean time, I declare that my heart entertains a passion which all your remonstrances shall not impair; so you may take your measures accordingly, and redouble your vigilance; for I confess I will spare nothing to deceive it.' At these words, the grim-faced duenna (who, I imagined, was about to give me a sample of her office) cleared up her austere countenance, and said with a smiling air, 'I am charmed with your humour, your frankness encourages mine, and I see we are designed for one another: Ah, my fair Mergellina! how little are you acquainted with me when you judge by the character your spouse the doctor gives me, and by this sour aspect I assume! I am so far from being an enemy to pleasure, that my sole motive for hiring myself as the minister of jealous husbands is, that I may the more effectually serve the handsome wives. I have long possessed the great mystery of disguising myself; and I may call myself doubly happy, because I enjoy the convenience of sin and the reputation of virtue at the same time. Between you and me, this is the scope of mankind in general: virtue itself is too difficult to be acquired; and therefore people are satisfied with possessing the appearances of it.

"'Leave your conduct to my direction, (added the governante) and I warrant you, we will soon impose upon old Doctor Oloroso, who, by my troth, shall soon share the fate of Signor Apuntador; for I don't see why the forehead of a physician should

be more respected than that of an apothecary. Poor Apuntador! how many tricks his wife and I have played him! She was a lovely creature! a good-humoured soul, heaven rest it! I can assure you she made a good use of her youth; and did not want abundance of admirers, whom I introduced to the house without ever being discovered by her husband: look upon me, therefore, madam, with a more favourable eye, and be persuaded, that whatever talent the old squire might have for your service, you will lose nothing by the change, and perhaps find me still more useful than he was."

"I leave you to judge, Diego, (continued Mergellina) how much I thought myself obliged to the duenna for this frank declaration, for I looked upon her as a person of the most austere virtue; so apt are people to be deceived in women. Her sincerity gained my heart in a moment; I embraced her in a transport of joy, that convinced her how much I was charmed with my lot, in having her for a governante; and afterwards freely imparted my sentiments to her, and begged that she would, without loss of time, contrive a private meeting with you, which she has not failed to procure. This very morning she set at work that old woman who spoke to you, and who is an agent whom she often employed for the apothecary's wife. But the most pleasant part of this adventure (added she, laughing) is, that Melancia, understanding from me that my husband commonly sleeps sound, has gone to bed to him, and this very minute supplies my place." "So much the worse, madam, (said I to Mergellina) I cannot approve this invention: your husband may wake and perceive the cheat."—"He cannot perceive it (answered she, with some precipitation;) do not be uneasy on that score; nor let a groundless panic poison the delight you ought to enjoy with a young lady who has a regard for you."

The old doctor's wife, observing that I was still

dismayed, notwithstanding her assurance, did every thing in her power to encourage me, and practised so many different endeavours for that purpose, that she succeeded at last, and I resolved to profit by the occasion; but just as Cupid, attended by the Sports and Smiles, was about to crown my happiness, we were astonished by a loud rap at the street door. Immediately Love and his train took wing, like a flock of fearful birds dispersed by sudden noise!—Mergellina concealed me in a hurry under a table that was in the hall; then blowing out the lamp as had been agreed upon between her governante and her, in case such a cross accident should happen, she went to the chamber where her husband was a-bed. In the mean time the whole house rung with the repeated knocks that were thundered at the door: and the doctor, starting out of his sleep, called Melancia.—The duenna, jumping out of bed (although the doctor, who mistook her for his wife, bid her lie still) joined her mistress in the dark, who, feeling her, called Melancia also, and bid her go and see who knocked at the door: "Madam (answered the governante) I am here—Go to bed again, if you please, and I will go and see what is the matter." Meanwhile Mergellina, having undressed, slipt into bed to the doctor, who had not the least suspicion of the trick. —'Tis true, indeed, this scene was performed in the dark by two actresses, one of whom was matchless in her way, and the other an admirable pro ficient.

The duenna, wrapped in a robe de chambre, appearing soon after with a candle in her hand, said to her master, "Signor Doctor, be so good as to rise: the bookseller, Fernandez de Buendia, our neighbour, has fallen into an apoplexy, and you are desired to go with all haste to his assistance." The physician dressed himself as soon as he could, and went away; while his wife, in a loose gown, came along with the duenna into the hall where

I was, and drawing me from under the table, more dead than alive, "You have nothing to fear, Diego (said she) recollect yourself." Then, in a few words, she told me what had happened, and wanted to renew the conversation which had been interrupted; but this the governante opposed, saying, "Madam, perhaps your husband will find the bookseller dead, and return immediately. Besides (added she, perceiving me benumbed with fear) what would you do with this poor lad? He is in no condition to maintain the conference, which you had better defer till to-morrow."—Donna Mergellina consented to this proposal, not without regret; so well did she love the present time: and I believe she was very much mortified, that she could not then bestow upon the doctor the new cap she had destined for him.

As for my own part, less sorry for having been balked of love's most precious favours, than glad to be out of danger, I went back to my master's house, where I spent the night in reflecting upon my adventure.—I hesitated some time about going to the place of rendezvous next night, having as bad an opinion of this second enterprise as of the first: but the devil, who is always laying close siege to us, or rather, on such occasions, takes possession of our faculties, suggested that I should be a great booby to stop short in the middle of such a delightful journey, represented to my fancy Mergellina adorned with new charms, and heightened the value of the pleasures that awaited me: so that I resolved to pursue my point, and flattering myself with the hope of behaving with more courage than before, I repaired in this disposition to the doctor's door, between eleven and twelve next night, which was so dark that not one star appeared in the firmament. I mewed two or three times, to give notice that I was in the street; and nobody coming to the door, I not only repeated the signal, but also mimicked all the different expressions of a

cat, which a shepherd of Olmedo had taught me; and acquitted myself so well, that a neighbour going home, and mistaking me for one of those animals whose notes I imitated, took up a flint stone he found at his feet and threw it at me with his whole strength, saying, "Curse on the caterwauler!" I received the blow upon my head, which stunned me so much, that I had wellnigh tumbled backwards. I felt myself wounded: a circumstance sufficient to give me a disgust to gallantry; and, losing my love with my blood, returned to our house, where I alarmed and raised the whole family. My master examined and dressed my wound, which he thought dangerous; but it was attended with no bad consequence, and in three weeks disappeared.—During all that time I heard not one syllable about Mergellina: and it is not unlikely that Dame Melancia, in order to detach her from me, introduced her to some better acquaintance. But this gave me no concern, for as soon as I found myself perfectly cured, I left Madrid, in order to perform my tour of Spain.

CHAPTER VIII.

Signor Diego de Fuenta recounted a good many more adventures that had happened to him; but, in my opinion, so little worth the breath they cost, that I shall pass them over in silence; though I was obliged to hear the recital, which was so tedious, that it brought us as far as Ponte de Duera. In this village we staid the remaining part of the day; and at the inn where we lodged, ordered for supper a dish of cabbage-soup and a roasted hare, the species of which we were at great pains to prove beforehand. On the morrow, at

break of day, we pursued our journey, after having replenished our bottle with pretty good wine, and furnished our knapsack with some slices of bread, and the half of the hare which remained from our supper.

When we had gone about two leagues, we began to be hungry; and perceiving several large trees, which formed an agreeable shade in the fields, about two hundred paces from the highway, we went thither to make a halt, and found a man, seven or eight and twenty years old, soaking some crusts in a fountain. A long sword lay by him on the grass, with an havresack, of which he had unloaded his shoulders; and though he was poorly clothed, he discovered a good shape and mien.—We accosted him in a civil manner, upon which he saluted us with great complaisance; and presenting his crusts, asked with a smile, if we would be of his mess; we answered yes, provided he would give us leave to improve the repast, by joining our breakfast with his. He freely consenting, we immediately produced our victuals, which afforded no unpleasing view to the stranger, who cried in a transport of joy, "How, gentlemen! egad there's store of ammunition for the belly! I see you are provident people; for my own part, I seldom travel so well provided, but depend a good deal upon chance. Notwithstanding my present situation, however, I may say, without vanity, that I sometimes make a pretty brilliant appearance.—You must know, that I am usually treated like a prince, and have guards in my train."—"I understand you, (said Diego) you would intimate that you are a player."—"You have hit it (replied the other;) I have acted these fifteen years at least; for I performed some small parts while I was yet a child."—"To be plain with you (said the barber, shaking his head) I can scarce believe what you say.—I know what sort of people the comedians are; these gentlemen do not travel a-foot, and dine

with St. Anthony as you do; therefore I cannot help thinking that you are no more than a candle-snuffer."—"You may think of me as you please (replied the stage-player;) but I affirm, that I act the very top parts, and among the rest that of the lover."—"If that be the case (said my comrade) I congratulate you upon it; and am very proud, that Signor Gil Blas and I have the honour to breakfast with a person of such importance."

We then began to gnaw our crusts, and the precious remains of the hare, bestowing such rude embraces on the bottle, that it was empty in a very short time; and being so busy with what we were about, that we scarce spoke one word during the repast; which being ended, the conversation was thus resumed: "I am surprised (said the barber to the player) to see you in such indifferent circumstances: for a stage hero, methinks, you have a very needy appearance: you will pardon my freedom."—"Your freedom! (cried the actor) ah! truly you are little acquainted with Melchior Zapata. Thank Heaven, I am not at all exceptious: you do me a pleasure in speaking so frankly; for I myself love to tell my mind without reserve. I sincerely own I am not rich.—Look, (added he, showing that his doublet was lined with play-bills) this is the stuff that usually serves me for lining; and if you have any curiosity to see my wardrobe, it shall be forthwith gratified." At the same time he took out of his knapsack an old suit laced with tinsel, a sorry hat with some old plumes of feathers, a pair of silk stockings full of holes, and red buskins very much worn. "You see (said he) I am tolerably poor."—"That's what surprises me (replied Diego.) So you have neither wife nor daughter?"—"I have a wife, young and handsome, (said Zapata) yet I am never a bit the better for it, so wonderfully capricious is my fate. I married a beautiful actress, in hopes that she would not let me starve; and unfortunately for

me, she is incorruptibly chaste. Who the devil would not have been deceived as I was? There happened to be one virtuous woman among the strollers, and she must fall to my lot!"—"Truly you have had bad luck (said the barber:) but why did not you marry an actress of the king's company at Madrid, in which case you could not have been disappointed?"—"I grant it, (replied the player) but a plague upon it, a little country-stroller dares not aspire to those famous heroines: that is as much as an actor of the prince's company can do; some of whom are even obliged to match in the city.—Luckily for them, the city is well stored, and they often light on yoke-fellows not a whit inferior to those princesses who were brought up behind the scenes."

"Have you never endeavoured (said my companion to him) to be introduced into that company? Must one have infinite merit to be admitted into it?"—"Good! (replied Melchior) you are merry with your infinite merit.—It is composed of twenty actors: ask their character in town, and you will hear them finely handled. More than one half deserve to carry the knapsack still; but for all that it is no easy matter to be received among them. One must have money, or powerful friends, to supply the want of talents.—This I ought to know, since I am just come from making a trial at Madrid, where I have been hooted and hissed in a hellish manner, although I deserved to be applauded to the skies; for I roared, ranted, burlesqued nature an hundred times! and moreover, in my declamation, clapped my clinched fist to my princess's nose.—In a word, I performed in the taste of the great actors in vogue; and yet the same audience that relished this behaviour in them, could not endure it in me.—You see the force of prejudice! wherefore, finding myself incapable of pleasing on that stage, and having nothing to secure my reception in defiance of the town, I am

going back to Zamora, where I shall rejoin my wife and comrades, who are not in the most flourishing circumstances. God grant that we may not be obliged to beg our way to the next town; a misfortune which has already happened to us more than once."

With these words the prince of the drama sprung up, shouldered his knapsack, girded on his sword, and, at parting, pronounced with a theatrical air, "Gentlemen, adieu! may the gods exhaust their bounties on you."—"And you (replied Diego;) may you, at your return to Zamora, behold your wife's condition and temper changed." Signor Zapata no sooner showed his heels than he began to rehearse as he walked, and immediately the barber and I hissed, to put him in mind of his trial: the noise reaching his ears, he thought he still heard the cat-calls of Madrid; upon which he looked back, and perceiving that we made merry at his expence, far from being incensed at our buffoonery, took all in good part and continued his noise, bursting into fits of laughter all the way. We returned his mirth with all our might; and getting back into the high road pursued our journey.

CHAPTER IX.

Having slept that night between Moyados and Valpuesta, in a little village whose name I have forgot, we arrived next day, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, in the plain of Olmedo. "Signor Gil Blas (said my comrade) there is the place of my nativity, which I cannot behold again without transport; so natural is it to love one's country."—"Signor Diego (answered I,) one who expresses such regard for his native country might,

I think, have spoke of it a little more advantageously than you have done: Olmedo seems to be a city, and you told me it was only a village. It ought, at least, to be dignified with the epithet of market-town."—"I beg its pardon (replied the barber;) but I must own, that after having seen Madrid, Toledo, Saragossa, and all the great cities I touched at in making my tour of Spain, I look upon the small ones as villages." As we advanced into the plain, we thought we observed a great concourse of people near Olmedo; and when we were near enough to discern objects, we found something to attract our attention.

There were three tents pitched at a small distance from one another, and hard by a great number of cooks and scullions preparing a feast: some laid the cloth on long tables, placed under the tents; some filled earthen pitchers with wine; others made the pots boil, and others again turned spits that were loaded with all sorts of meat: but what I considered more attentively than all the rest was a great stage, raised and adorned with decorations of painted paper of different colours, and garnished with Greek and Latin devices. The barber no sooner perceived the inscriptions than he said, "All these Greek mottos savour strongly of my uncle Thomas, who, I'll hold a wager, has a hand in the business, for, between you and me, he is a learned man, and has a power of college books by heart: his greatest fault is, that he incessantly quotes passages from them in conversation, which is not agreeable to every body. Besides (added he) my uncle has translated a good many Greek and Latin authors, and is quite master of the ancients, as one may see by the learned remarks which he has made: had it not been for him, we should never have known, that in the city of Athens children cried when they were flogged: we owe that discovery to his profound erudition."

After my comrade and I had observed all those

things which I have mentioned, we were curious to know the cause of such preparations, and went forward to enquire, when Diego recognized the director of the feast, Signor Thomas de la Fuenta, whom he accosted with great eagerness. The school-master did not, at first, know the young barber; so much was he altered during an absence of ten years: but, recollecting him at last, he embraced him affectionately, saying, "What! do I see thee then, Diego, my dear nephew? Do I see thee returned to the town where thou first sawest the light? Thou art come to visit thy household-gods; and Heaven restores thee safe and sound to thy kindred! O day, thrice and four times happy! O day, worthy to be marked with a white stone! A world of changes have happened, my friend (pursued he:) thy uncle Pedro, the poet, has fallen a victim to Pluto, having died three months ago. That miser, while alive, was afraid of wanting the necessaries of life. Argenti pallebat amore. For though he received large pensions from several grandees, he did not spend ten pistoles a year for his subsistence; and was even served by a valet whom he did not maintain. That fool, more senseless than the Grecian Aristippus, who ordered his slaves to throw away, in the deserts of Africa, the riches they carried, as a burthen that incommoded them in their march—he, I say, heaped up all the gold and silver he could scrape together; and for whom? for those very heirs he would not so much as see. He died worth thirty thousand ducats, which thy father, thy uncle Bertrand, and I, have equally shared among us; so that we are able to settle our children to our heart's desire. My brother Nicholas has already disposed of thy sister Theresa, whom he has given in marriage to the son of one of our alcades. Connubio junxit stabili, propriumque dicavit. These nuptials, performed under the most happy auspices, we have celebrated these two days with such preparation;

three tents being pitched in the plain, one for each of the three heirs of Pedro, who, in their turns, bear the expence of the day. I wish thou hadst arrived sooner, to have seen the beginning of our rejoicings. The day before yesterday, when they were married, thy father gave a sumptuous entertainment, which was followed by a course of the ring: thy uncle, the mercer, treated yesterday, and regaled us with a pastoral feast; ten of the genteelest youths, and as many handsome maidens, were dressed like shepherds, all the ribbons and points in his shop being employed to adorn them.—This gay company performed several dances, and sung a thousand light and tender catches: nevertheless, though nothing was ever more gallant, the spectators did not seem to relish it, which shows that pastoral is quite out of date.

"To-day (added he) every thing is to be at my cost, and I will exhibit to the inhabitants of Olmedo a show of my own invention. Finis coronabit opus. I have ordered a theatre to be raised, on which (God willing) I will make my scholars represent a piece of my own composing, entitled, 'The Diversions of Muley Bugentuf, King of Morocco.' It will be extremely well acted, because I have scholars who declaim like the players of Madrid: they are the sons of fashionable people living at Pennafiel and Segovia, who are boarded with me, and are become excellent actors under my instruction. Their performance will appear to be of a masterly stamp, ut ita dicam. With regard to the piece, I shall say nothing, that thou mayest enjoy the pleasure of surprise; but only observe that it must transport the spectators: for it is one of those tragic subjects, which wake the soul by the images of death they present to the view.—I am of Aristotle's opinion, that the chief end of tragedy is to raise terror. Oh! if I had attached myself to the drama, I would have introduced none but bloody-minded princes and heroic assas-

sins on the scene, and would have bathed myself in gore: and in my tragedies not only the principal persons, but even their guards should have perished, I would have murdered them all, to the very prompter. In a word, my taste is horror: and we see that such poems captivate the multitude, support the luxury of the players, and enable the author to live at his ease."

Just as he had done speaking, we saw coming out of the village into the plain a great concourse of men and women. These were no other than the new married couple, accompanied by their relations and friends, and preceded by ten or twelve musicians, who, playing all together, performed a most thundering concert. We went up to meet them, and Diego made himself known; upon which the whole assembly broke out into shouts of joy, and every one was eager to embrace him; so that he was sufficiently employed in receiving their expressions of friendship. His whole family, as well as all who were present, having well nigh smothered him with caresses, his father said to him, "Welcome, Diego; thou findest thy parents somewhat bettered in their circumstances, my child. I shall say no more at present, but explain myself more particularly by and by." Meanwhile the company, advancing into the plain, repaired to the tents, and sat down at the tables that were covered; and I and my companion, whom I would not quit, dined with the bridegroom and bride, who seemed to be very well matched. The repast was pretty long, because the school-master had the vanity to furnish three courses, in order to excel his brothers, who had not treated with such magnificence.

After the banquet, all the guests expressed impatience to see the representation of Signor Thomas's piece, not doubting (as they said) that the production of such a fine genius would answer their most sanguine expectation. Accordingly, ap-

proaching the stage, before which the musicians had already taken their seats, in order to play between the acts, every body, in the most profound silence, waited for the beginning. The actors appeared on the scene, and the author, with his poem in his hand, sat down on one side, to prompt them. It was not without reason that he told us the piece was tragical; for, in the first act, the king of Morocco, by way of recreation, shot an hundred Moorish slaves with arrows: in the second, he beheaded thirty Portuguese officers, whom one of his captains had made prisoners of war: and in the third and last, this monarch, mad with his wives, set fire with his own hand to a detached palace in which they were shut up, and reduced them and it to ashes. The Moorish slaves, as well as the Portuguese officers, were figures of ozier, very artfully made: and the palace, composed of paper, seemed all of a flame by an artificial fire-work. This conflagration, accompanied with a thousand doleful shrieks, that seemed to issue from the midst of the flames, concluded the piece, and closed the scene in a very diverting manner. The whole plain echoed with the applause that was given to such a fine tragedy, which justified the good taste of the poet, and showed that he knew how to choose his subject.

I thought there was no more to be seen, after the Diversions of Muley Bugentuf; but I was mistaken: for we were advertised of a new show by the sound of drums and trumpets. This was a distribution of prizes: Thomas de la Fuenta, to make the feast more solemn, having ordered all his scholars (as well those who were boarded with him as the rest) to compose, and intending to bestow on those who had succeeded best, books bought at Segovia with his own coin. Immediately, therefore, two school-forms were brought upon the stage, with a press full of little books handsomely bound; then all the actors returned upon the

scene, and ranged themselves round Signor Thomas, who looked as big as the head master of a college, and held a paper in his hand on which were written the names of those who were to obtain the prizes: this he gave to the king of Morocco, who began to read it with a loud voice; and every scholar who was called, going in a respectful manner, received a book from the pedant, who was afterwards crowned with bays, and ordered to sit down on one of the benches, that he might be exposed to the admiration of the crowd. Nevertheless, how desirous soever the school-master was of sending home the spectators satisfied, he could by no means effect it; because having distributed almost all the prizes among his boarders, as the custom is, the mothers of some of the rest, being present, were offended: and openly accused the pedant of partiality, in such a manner, that this entertainment, which had hitherto been so glorious for him, had like to have ended in mischief, like the feast of the Lapithæ.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

GIL BLAS

OF

SANTILLANE.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING staid some time with the young barber, I afterwards joined a merchant of Segovia with four mules, on which he had transported goods to Valladolid, and was returning with them unloaded. We became acquainted on the road, and he conceived such a friendship for me, that he insisted upon my lodging at his house when we arrived at Segovia. There he detained me two days; and when I was ready to set out for Madrid, along with a carrier, he entrusted me with a letter, which he desired I would in person deliver according to the direction, without telling me that it was a recommendation. I did not fail to present it to Signor Mattheo Melendez, a woollen-draper, who lived near the Sun-gate, at the corner of the Trunkmaker's-street; and he no sooner opened it, and read the contents, than he said, with a complaisant air,

"Signor Gil Blas, Pedro Pelacio, my correspon dent, writes so pressingly in your behalf, that I cannot dispense with your lodging at my house. He moreover entreats me to find a place for you; and I undertake the office with pleasure, being persuaded that I shall find no difficulty in procuring for you a good settlement."

I accepted the offer of Melendez with so much the more joy, as my finances were sensibly diminished: but I did not live long at his expence; for in eight days he gave me to know, that he had recommended me to a gentleman of his acquaintance who wanted a valet de chambre; and that, in all probability, I should be preferred to the post. The gentleman coming in at that moment, "Signor (said Melendez, showing me to him) this is the young man I mentioned to you. He is a youth of honour and sobriety, and I can answer for his good behaviour as much as for my own." The cavalier, having looked at me attentively, said he liked my countenance, and took me into his service. "He may follow me now (added he) and I will instruct him in his duty." At these words he bade the merchant good-morrow, and conducting me into the great street just by St. Philip's church, we entered a pretty good house, one wing of which he possessed; and, going up five or six steps of a stair, he introduced me into a chamber, secured by two strong doors, which he opened, and in the first I perceived a small window grated with iron; through this chamber we went into another, where there was a bed and other furniture, more calculated for convenience than show.

If my new master considered me attentively at the house of Melendez, I examined him with great earnestness in my turn. He was a man turned of fifty, seemed to be serious and reserved, though good-natured withal; so that I conceived no bad opinion of him. He put several questions to me about my family, and being satisfied with my an-

swers, "Gil Blas, (said he) I believe thou art a sensible young fellow, and I am very glad to have such an one in my service. As for thee, thou shalt have no cause to complain: I will give thee six rials a day for victuals, clothes, wages, and all, exclusive of some little perquisites thou mayest enjoy, and I am easily served; for I keep no table, but always dine abroad.—All that thou hast to do in a morning is to clean my clothes, and thou shalt be at thy own disposal during the rest of the day: take care only to come back early in the evening, and wait for me at the door. This is all I exact." After having thus prescribed my duty, he took out his purse, and gave me six rials as a beginning to fulfil articles; then going out, he locked the doors himself, and putting the keys in his pocket, "Friend (said he) don't follow me: go where you please, but be sure to be on the stair when I return in the evening." So saying, he left me to dispose of myself as I should think proper.

"In good faith, Gil Blas (said I to myself) thou couldst not have found a better master: what! to light on a man who, for brushing his clothes and helping him to dress of a morning, gives me six rials per day, with liberty to walk and take my diversion like a scholar during the vacation! Egad, this is the happiest of all situations! No wonder that I was so desirous of being at Madrid: I had certainly some supernatural intimation of the happiness that awaited me." I spent the day in strolling about the streets, diverting myself with looking at every thing that was new to me, and this gave me sufficient employment. In the evening, after having supped at an eating-house not far from our lodgings, I betook myself to the place whither my master had ordered me to repair, and where he himself arrived three quarters of an hour after me, seemingly well pleased with my punctuality. "Very well (said he) this is right: I love to see servants attentive to their duty." So saying

he opened the doors of his apartment, and shut them again as soon as we had got in: being in the dark, he took a tinder-box and struck a light, by the help of which I assisted to undress him. When he was a-bed, I lighted, by his order, a lamp that stood in his chimney, and carried the candle into the antichamber, where I went to sleep in a bed without curtains.—Next morning he got up between nine and ten o'clock, and, when I had dusted his clothes, counted me six more rials, and dismissed me till the evening: after which he went out also, not without locking his doors with great care; so we parted again for the remaining part of the day.

Such was our manner of living, which I found very agreeable; and the best joke of all was, I did not know my master's name: Melendez himself was ignorant of it, being only acquainted with him as a gentleman who came sometimes to his shop, and bought cloth of him as he had occasion for it. Our neighbours could give me no better information; all of them assuring me that my master was utterly unknown to them, although he had lived two years in the ward. They told me that he visited nobody in the neighbourhood; and some of them, accustomed to make rash inferences, concluded from thence that he was no better than he should be. They went still farther, suspecting him to be a spy of the king of Portugal, and charitably advertised me of the suspicion, that I might take my measures accordingly. I was disturbed at this advice; and reflected, that if the thing was so, I should run the risk of visiting the prison of Madrid. I could not confide in my innocence, my past misfortunes having taught me to dread justice; for I had found by experience, that if she does not put the innocent to death, she at least treats them with so little hospitality, that her lodgers are always in a very melancholy situation.

In such a delicate conjuncture I consulted Me-

lendez, who did not know how to advise me; for, if he could not believe that my master was a spy, on the other hand, he had no certain reason to think otherwise; so that I resolved to observe my patron narrowly, and to leave him if I should perceive that he was undoubtedly an enemy to the state; but I thought prudence, and the easiness of my place, required that I should be first perfectly sure of his practices. With this view I began to keep a strict eye over his actions: and in order to sound him, "Sir (said I, one evening, while I undressed him) one does not know how to live so as to avoid slander: the world is very malicious, and we, among others, are very little obliged to our neighbours. You cannot guess in what manner the malicious creatures talk of us."—"Right, Gil Blas, (answered he) but what can they say of us, child?"—"Ah! truly (I replied) scandal never wants matter. Virtue herself furnishes food for it. Our neighbours say that we are dangerous people, and deserve to be taken notice of by the government. In a word, you are thought to be a spy for the king of Portugal." While I pronounced these words, I looked hard at my master, as Alexander* eyed his physician; and employing all my penetration to discover what effect my report produced in him, thought I observed an emotion that too well agreed with the conjectures of the neighbourhood, and he fell into a fit of musing, upon which I did not put the most favourable construction; but he soon recovered himself, and said, with an air of

* Alexander the Great having received a letter, intimating that his physician intended to poison him, took the cup of medicine which he prescribed, and swallowing it without hesitation put the letter into the suspected person's hand, fixing his eye stedfastly upon him, while he read it, in order to distinguish in his countenance the signs of innocence or guilt.

tranquillity, "Gil Blas, let our neighbours think as they please, without making our peace depend on their imaginations; and since we give them no cause to think amiss of us, let their opinion give us no uneasiness."

Upon this he went to bed, and I followed his example, without knowing what to think of the matter. Next day, just as we were going out in the morning, we heard a loud rap at the outward door; my master opened the other, and looking through the small grate saw a decent sort of a man at it, who said, "Signor Cavalier, I am an alguazil, and come hither to tell you that the corregidor would speak with you."—"What does he want with me?" (replied my patron)—"That I am ignorant of, Signor, (said the alguazil;) but if you will take the trouble to go to his house, you will soon know."—"I am his most humble servant (resumed my master) but have no manner of business with him." So saying, he shut the second door; and having walked up and down for some time, like one alarmed at the discourse of the alguazil, put six rials into my hand, saying, "Gil Blas, thou mayest go out, my friend. I do not intend to go abroad so early, and have no further occasion for thee this morning." These words made me believe that the fear of being apprehended obliged him to stay at home; so that when I left him, in order to see if my suspicions were unjust, I hid myself in a place from whence I could see him if he should come out; and should have had the patience to stay there the whole morning, had he not spared me that trouble. But an hour after I saw him walking in the street with an air of assurance that at first confounded my penetration: but, far from being duped by these appearances, I distrusted them, having no favourable opinion of the man. I looked upon his composure as a piece of affectation, and even imagined that his remaining at home was with a view of securing his gold and

jewels; and that, in all probability, he would consult his safety by immediate flight. I did not expect to see him again, and hesitated about going in the evening to give my attendance at the door; so sure I was that he would quit the city instantly, to escape from the danger that threatened him. I did not fail, however, of being there; and, to my utter surprise, my master returned at his usual time, went to bed without showing the least uneasiness, and got up next day with the same tranquillity.

When we had done dressing, somebody knocked at the door; upon which, my master, looking through the grate, perceived the same alguazil who had been there the preceding day, and asked what he wanted. "Open, (answered the alguazil) here is monsieur the corregidor."* At this formidable name my blood froze in my veins; for I was cursedly afraid of these gentlemen since I had passed through their hands; and wished that moment to be an hundred leagues from Madrid; but my patron, less afraid than I, opened the door, and received the judge with great respect. "You see (said the corregidor to him) I do not come to your lodgings with many attendants, being desirous of doing every thing with as little noise as possible: and I believe that you deserve this respect, notwithstanding the ugly reports that are spread of you. Tell me, therefore, your name, and business at Madrid!"—"Signor (replied my master) I was born in New Castile, and my name is Don Bernard de Castel Blazo: with regard to my business, I divert myself in walking, frequenting shows, and enjoying the agreeable conversation of a few select friends."—"Doubtless (said the judge) you have a great income."—"No, sir, (resumed my patron, interrupting him) I have neither rents, lands, nor

* The corregidor is the chief civil magistrate in every city of Spain, appointed by the king.

house."—"How do you live then?" (replied the corregidor)—"On that which you shall see") said Don Bernard)—at the same time, he lifted up a hanging, opened a door which I had not before observed, then another behind that, and carried the judge into a closet, where he showed him a great trunk filled with pieces of gold.

Then he went on; "Signor, you know that the Spaniards are enemies to work: nevertheless, how averse soever they may be to trouble, I may safely say that I excel them all in that particular; having a fund of laziness that renders me incapable of any manner of employment. If I had a mind to dignify my vices, I would call this laziness a philosophical indolence, the work of a mind weaned from every thing that is most ardently pursued in life. But I will frankly own that I am constitutionally idle: and so idle that, if I was under a necessity of working for my livelihood, I believe I should let myself die of hunger. With a view, therefore, to lead a life agreeable to my humour, to free myself from the trouble of managing my estate, and above all things to save myself the trouble of a steward, I have converted my whole patrimony, consisting of several considerable inheritances, into ready money. In this trunk are fifty thousand ducats; more than I shall ever have occasion for, was I to live another age; for I don't spend a thousand a year, and am already turned of fifty. I am not at all afraid of what is to happen; for, thank Heaven! I am not addicted to any one of the three things which commonly bring men to ruin: I am not a slave to my stomach, I play only for amusement, and am quite cured of women. So that I am under no apprehension of being ranked in my old age among those voluptuous dotards who purchase the favours of courtezans at an extravagant price."

"What a happy man you are! (said the corregidor) you are very unjustly suspected of being a

spy; that office being very unfit for a person of your character. Proceed, Don Bernard; (added he) continue the life you now lead, and, far from disturbing your happiness, I declare myself the guardian of it; I beg the favour of your friendship, and offer you mine in return."—"Ah, Signor! (cried my master, penetrated with these obliging expressions) I accept the precious offer you make with equal joy and respect; for, in vouchsafing me your friendship, you increase my wealth and crown my felicity." After this conversation, which the alguazil and I overheard at the closet-door, the corregidor took his leave of Don Bernard, who could not enough express his gratitude; while I, to second my master, and assist him in doing the honours of the house, overwhelmed the alguazil with civilities, making a thousand profound bows, though, in the bottom of my soul, I harboured that disdain and aversion which every man of honour has for one of his occupation.

CHAPTER II.

Don Bernard de Castel Blazo, after having waited upon the corregidor to the street, returned with expedition to lock his strong box, and all his doors that secured it. Then we went out both very well satisfied; he for having acquired a powerful friend, and I for being now ensured in my six rials a day. The desire I had to recount this adventure to Melendez made me take the road to his house, which when I had almost reached, I perceived Captain Rolando. I was confounded at finding him in this place, and could not help shivering at sight of him! He knew me at once, accosted me very gravely, and preserving still his

air of superiority, ordered me to follow him. I obeyed with fear and trembling, saying to myself, "Alas! he will doubtless make me pay what I owe him. Whither will he lead me? perhaps to some subterranean abode in this city. A plague upon it! if I thought so, I would let him see in a hurry that I have not got the gout in my toes." As I walked behind him, I resolved to take particular notice of the place where he should stop, from which I proposed to scamper off as fast as my legs would carry me, should it seem the least suspicious.

But Rolando soon banished my fear, by going into a noted tavern, whither I followed him; and where he called for the best wine, and bespoke dinner; in the mean time we went into a room by ourselves, where the captain spoke in this manner: "Thou must be surprised, Gil Blas, to meet thy old commander in this place; and wilt be more so still when thou shalt hear what I am going to relate: that day on which I left thee in our subterranean retreat, and set out for Mansilla with my whole company, in order to dispose of the mules and horses which we had taken the preceding day, it was our fortune to meet the son of the corregidor of Leon in his coach, accompanied by four men on horseback well armed. We made two of them bite the dust, and the others betake themselves to flight; while the coachman, afraid of his master's life, cried, in a suppliant voice, 'O dear gentlemen! in the name of God, do not kill the only son of the corregidor of Leon.' My people did not at all relent at these words, which, on the contrary, inspired them with fury: 'Gentlemen (said one among us) let not the son of our mortal enemy escape: how many people of our profession hath his father put to death! let us avenge them now, and sacrifice this victim to their manes.' The rest of my men approved of this proposal; and even my lieutenant prepared to act the high-priest in this ceremony, when I held his hands, saying, 'Stop, at your peril!

Why should we shed blood unnecessarily? Let us be satisfied with the purse of this young man, whom (since he makes no resistance) it would be the utmost barbarity to kill: besides, he is not accountable for the actions of his father, who does no more than his duty in condemning us to death; just as we do ours, in rifling travellers on the highway.'

"My intercession was far from being unserviceable to the corregidor's son, from whom we took nothing but his money; and having carried off the horses of the two men we had slain, we sold them, together with our own, at Mansilla; then returning to our cavern, which we reached next day before it was light, we were not a little astonished to find the trap-door lifted up: and our surprise redoubled when we saw Leonarda fettered in the kitchen. Being briefly informed by her of what had happened, we wondered how thou couldst outwit us, never having thought thee capable of playing such a clever trick, and we forgave thee on account of the invention. Having untied our cook-maid, and given orders to dress victuals for us, we went to look after our horses in the stable, where the old negro, who had received no sustenance for four-and-twenty hours, was at the last gasp. We would have given him all the assistance in our power, but he had lost his senses, and was otherwise so low, that, notwithstanding our good-will, we left the poor devil in the clutches of death. This did not deprive us of our appetite, which having satisfied with a sumptuous meal, we retired to our several chambers, and slept the rest of the day: when we got up, Leonarda let us know that Domingo was no more, upon which we carried him to the cellar, where thou mayest remember thy bed was, and there performed his funeral obsequies, as if he had enjoyed the honour of being our companion.

"Five or six days after it happened that, intending to make an excursion, we one morning, on the

skirts of the wood, fell in with three troops belonging to the holy brotherhood, who seemed waiting in order to attack us. As we perceived only one of the three at first, we despised it, though more numerous than our company, and attacked it accordingly; but while we were engaged with this, the other two, which had found means hitherto to keep themselves concealed, rushed upon us so suddenly, that our valour was of little or no service, and we were under a necessity of yielding to the numbers of the foe. Our lieutenant and two of our men fell on the field, while the two that remained and I were so hemmed in and overpowered that we were taken prisoners; and while two of their troops conducted us to Leon, the third went and destroyed our retreat, which had been discovered as follows: a peasant of Luceno, crossing the forest in his return home, perceived by accident the trap-door of our cavern lifted up, that very day on which thou madest thy escape with the lady; and suspecting that it was the place of our abode, had not courage to go in, but contented himself with taking a good observation of the place, which the better to mark, he cut off, with his knife, thin slices of bark from the trees at small distances as he went along, until he had got quite out of the wood: then, repairing to Leon, imparted his discovery to the corregidor, who, receiving it with so much the more joy, as his son had been robbed by our company, assembled three troops in order to apprehend us, and the peasant was their guide.

"My arrival furnished a show for all the inhabitants of Leon: had I been a Portuguese general made prisoner of war, the people could not have been more eager to see me. 'Behold (said they) behold the famous captain who was the terror of this country: and who, with his two comrades, deserves to have his flesh torn from his bones with red-hot pincers.' Being carried before the corregidor, he began to insult me, (saying, 'Well, misera-

able wretch! Heaven, wearied with the disorders of thy life, at last resigns thee to my justice.'—'Sir (replied I) if my crimes are manifold, at least I cannot reproach myself with the death of your only son, whose life I preserved, for which you owe me some acknowledgment.'—'Ah, miscreant! (cried he) people of thy character are not entitled to the privileges of honour: and even if I had a mind to save thy life, the duty of my office would not allow me.' Having spoke to me in this manner, he ordered us to be imprisoned in a dungeon, where he did not let my companions linger long; for they went out, in three days, to act their last tragical scene in the market-place. As for me, I remained three whole weeks in jail, imagining that my punishment was deferred in order to make it more terrible; and was in expectation of a death altogether new; when the corregidor, ordering me to be brought into his presence, said, 'Listen to thy sentence.—Thou art free! Had it not been for thee, my only son would have been murdered on the highway. As a father I was willing to acknowledge this piece of service, but not having it in my power to acquit thee as a judge, I have written to court in thy behalf, solicited thy pardon, and obtained it. Thou mayest go then whither thou shalt please: but (added he) take my advice, reflect seriously on thy ill-spent life, and from henceforth quit the profession of robbery.'

"I was deeply affected with these words, and took the road to Madrid, resolving to turn over a new leaf, and live honestly in that city. I found my parents were dead, and their effects in the hands of an old relation, who gave me such a faithful account of them as guardians commonly do; all that I have been able to touch being no more than three thousand ducats, which, in all probability, is not above one fourth of what is my due. But what course could I take? I should gain nothing by going to law; therefore, to avoid idleness, I have

purchased the place of an alguazil. My brethren, out of decency, would have opposed my admission, had they been acquainted with my story, which luckily they were ignorant of, or pretended to be so, which is the same thing; for in that honourable corps it is the business of every individual to conceal his own exploits; thank Heaven! not one of us can justly reproach his fellow: so that it may be said of the fraternity, the devil may take the best. Nevertheless, my friend, (added Rolando) I will now disclose the bottom of my soul: the profession which I have embraced is not at all to my liking; it requires a behaviour too delicate and mysterious for me; and whatever tricks we practise must be very crafty and secret. O how I regret my old profession! I grant, there is more safety in this new employment; but there was more pleasure in the other, and liberty is my delight. In all likelihood I shall get rid of my office, and set out one morning for the mountains at the source of the river Tagus, where I know there is a retreat inhabited by a numerous company, chiefly of Catalonians (that is making their eulogium in one word;) if thou wilt accompany me, we will go and increase the number of these great men: I shall be second captain in their company, and will, for thy better reception, assure them that I have seen thee ten times engaged by my side; I will extol thy valour to the skies, and say more in thy praise than a general says of an officer whom he wants to promote. I will take care not to mention a word of the trick thou hast played, because it would make them suspicious of thee: the adventure shall therefore be concealed. Well, (added he) art thou ready to follow my fortune? I wait for thy reply."

"So many men, so many minds; (said I to Rolando) you are born for hardy deeds, and I for a quiet and easy life."—"Oh! I understand you, (cried he interrupting me) the lady whom love persuaded

you to rescue still keeps possession of your heart, and doubtless you lead a happy life with her in Madrid: confess, Mr. Gil Blas, that you have taken lodgings for her, and spend together the pistoles which you carried off from the subterranean retreat." I told him that he was mistaken, and that, in order to undeceive him, I would, while we should be at dinner, relate the story of the lady: this I did accordingly, and informed him of all that had happened to me since I quitted the company. Towards the end of our repast, he resumed the subject of the Catalonians, owned that he was determined to join them, and made a new attempt to engage me in the same resolution: but finding that I was not to be persuaded, he darted a fierce look at me, saying in a very serious tone, "Since thou hast such a groveling soul as to prefer thy servile condition to the honour of associating with men of courage, I abandon thee to the baseness of thy inclination: but listen to the words I am about to pronounce, and let them remain engraven on thy memory: forget that thou hast met me to-day, and never talk of me from henceforth: for if ever I shall hear that thou so much as namest me in conversation—thou knowest me—I will say no more." Having thus expressed himself, he called to pay, discharged the bill, and we got up in order to part.

CHAPTER III.

As we went out of the tavern, and were taking leave of one another, my master, happening to pass, saw me, and I perceived looked hard at the captain, which made me believe that he was surprised

to find me acquainted with such a figure. Certain it is, that the appearance of Rolando could not prepossess people in his favour: for he was a very tall fellow, with a long visage and hook nose; and though not ugly, had very much the air of a rank sharper.

I was not deceived in my conjectures; for, in the evening, I found Don Bernard still harping on the captain's figure, and extremely well disposed to believe all the fine things I could have said of him, had not my mouth been shut. "Gil Blas (said he) who is that tall sponger in whose company I saw thee to-day?" I replied, "He is an alguazil;" and thought he would rest satisfied with that answer: but he asked a great many other questions; and as I appeared embarrassed, because I remembered the threat of Rolando, he broke off the conversation abruptly, and went to bed. Next morning when I had done my duty as usual, instead of six rials, he gave me as many ducats; saying, "Hold, my friend, here is what I give thee for having served me hitherto: go, and seek for another place, for I cannot put up with a servant who has such honourable acquaintances." I took it in my head to pretend, in my own justification, that my acquaintance with the alguazil was occasioned by my having prescribed for him while I practised physic at Valladolid. "Very well, (replied my master) that is an ingenious evasion: but thou shouldst have thought of it last night, and not have been so much disconcerted."—"Sir, (added I) I thought it would be imprudent in me to tell it: and that was the cause of my confusion."—"O! surely (replied he, clapping my shoulders gently) you have been very prudent; I did not think thou hadst been so cunning. Go, child, I have no further occasion for thee."

I went instantly to inform Melendez of this piece of bad news, who told me, for my consolation, that he intended to introduce me into a better family:

and accordingly a few days after, "Gil Blas, my friend, (said he) you don't know what good news I have to tell you; you are going to enjoy the most agreeable post you could desire; for I will settle you with Don Matthias de Silva, a man of the first quality, and one of those young lords who go under the denomination of beaus: he does me the honour to buy cloth of me, on trust, indeed; but there is nothing to be lost by people of his rank; for they commonly marry rich heiresses, who pay their debts: and even if that should not happen, a tradesman, who understands his business, sells always so dear that he can afford to lose three-fourths of his bargain. The steward of Don Matthias is my particular friend. Let us go to him now; he will himself present you to his master: and you may depend upon it, he will, for my sake, treat you with uncommon regard."

In our way to the house of Don Matthias, the merchant said, "It will not be amiss, I believe, to give you some information of the character of this steward, whose name is Gregorio Rodriguez. Between you and me, he is a man of no family, who, finding himself born for business, followed the bent of his genius, and enriched himself with the pillage of two families which he served in quality of steward. I assure you he has a great deal of vanity, and loves to see the rest of the servants cringe to him. They must address themselves first to him, when they have the least favour to ask of their master, for, should it happen that they obtain it without his interest, he has always expedients in readiness by which it will either be revoked or rendered ineffectual. Remember this, Gil Blas, is the regulation of your conduct: pay your court to Signor Rodriguez, preferable to your master himself, and do all that lies in your power to please him: his friendship will bestead you much: he will pay your wages punctually; and, if you are dexterous enough to acquire his confidence, he may give

you some pretty bone to pick out of the number he has in his possession. Don Matthias is a young lord who minds nothing but his pleasure, and would not for the world inform himself of the state of his own affairs. What a glorious family is that for a steward."

Arriving at the house, we desired to speak with Signor Rodriguez, who, we were told, was in his own apartment; there we found him with a kind of farmer, who had a blue canvas bag of money in his hand. The steward, who looked more pale and yellow than a girl oppressed with her maidenhead, came towards Melendez with open arms; he, on the other hand, met him in the same manner, and they embraced one another with demonstrations of friendship, in which there was, at least, as much art as nature. Then my affair coming on the carpet, Rodriguez examined me from head to foot, and told me, in a very polite manner, that I was just such an one as Don Matthias wanted, and that he would with pleasure present me to that lord Upon which, Melendez letting him know how much he was interested in my behalf, and begging that he would favour me with his protection, committed me to his care, and, after abundance of compliments, withdrew. He was no sooner gone than Rodriguez said to me, "I will conduct you to my master as soon as I can dispatch this honest countryman." Then going to the peasant, and taking hold of the bag, "Talego (said he) let us see if there be just five hundred pistoles here." Having counted the money, and found it right, he gave the farmer a discharge for the sum, and sent him about his business; and, putting the pistoles into the bag again, addressed himself to me, saying, "This is the right time for us to go to the levee of my master, who commonly rises about noon. It is near the hour, and I suppose he is up."

This was the case; we found Don Matthias in

his morning-gown, lolling in an easy chair, over an arm of which he had tilted one of his legs, and poised himself by leaning with his body the other way, and rasping tobacco, while he talked to a footman, who for the present did the duty of his valet de chambre. "My lord (said the steward to him) here is a young man whom I take the liberty to present as one fit to fill the place of the valet whom you dismissed two days ago. Melendez, your draper, recommends him, assuring me that he is a lad of merit, and I hope your lordship will be very well satisfied with his behaviour."—"Enough, (answered the young lord) since you introduce him to me, I receive him into my service with implicit faith, and make him my valet de chambre. So that affair is settled: but, Rodriguez (added he) let us talk of something else: you are come very opportunely; for I was just going to send for you. I have bad news to tell you, my dear Rodriguez! You must know I had ill luck at play last night. Together with an hundred pistoles which I had about me, I have lost two hundred more on my parole; and you know of what importance it is for people of quality to discharge that sort of debts; it is indeed the only kind which we are obliged in point of honour to pay; and we do not give ourselves much concern about the rest; you must, therefore, find two hundred pistoles immediately, and send them to the Countess of Pedrosa."—"Sir, (said the steward) it is sooner said than done. Where shall I get that sum to please you? I have not been able to finger one farthing of your tenants, let me threaten as hard as I can; and yet I am obliged to maintain your family in an honourable way, though I sweat blood and water in procuring wherewithal to defray the expence. True, indeed, I have hitherto, thank Heaven! made shift; but I am now reduced to such extremity that I know not what saint in heaven to invoke."—"All these harangues are useless (cried Don Matthias, inter-

rupting him) and you worry me with your reflections. Don't you imagine, Rodriguez, that I will change my disposition, and divert myself with looking into my own affairs. An agreeable amusement, truly, for a man of pleasure like me!"—"Have a little patience, (replied the steward) at the rate you go on, I foresee that you will be rid of that care in a very short time."—"You fatigue me (said the young lord in a passion) you murder me. —Give me leave to ruin myself imperceptibly; I tell you I want two hundred pistoles: and I must have them."—"I'll go then (said Rodriguez) and have recourse to the little old man who has already lent you money at high interest."—"You may, if you please, have recourse to the devil; (answered Don Matthias) provided I have the two hundred pistoles, I shall give myself no further trouble about the matter."

Just as he had pronounced these words in a hasty and discontented manner, the steward went away, and a young man of quality, called Don Antonio Centelles, came in. "What is the matter? (said this last to my master) thou art cloudy, my friend: I perceive indignation in thy countenance. What can have put you into this bad humour? I'll lay a wager it was the man whom I met going out."—"Yes (replied Don Matthias) it was my steward: every time he comes to speak with me, I suffer for one quarter of an hour, by his talking about my affairs, and saying that I have quite exhausted my finances. Impertinent beast! he cannot say that he loses by me, I am sure '—"Why, child (said Don Antonio) I am in the same condition; having a factor not a whit more reasonable than thy steward. When the rogue, in obedience to my repeated orders, brings money for me, one would think he gave it out of his own pocket. He overwhelms me with reflections. 'Sir, (says he) you are undone, your rents are seized.' Upon which I am obliged to cut him short, in order to put an end to his

ridiculous discourse."—"The misfortune is (said Don Matthias) we cannot live without these people, who are necessary evils."—"They are so, (replied Centelles) but harkee (added he, laughing with all his might) there is a comical thought come into my head: a most incomparable conception! by which we may convert those scenes which we have with them into mirth; and divert ourselves with that which now gives us so much uneasiness. Let me demand of thy steward all the money thou shalt have occasion for; while thou dost the same by my manager; then they may moralize as they please, we can hear them with great composure; because thy steward will show me thy accounts, and my factor will entertain thee with mine. I shall hear of nothing but thy profusion, and thou wilt see nothing but mine. This will be admirable sport."

A thousand bright strokes succeeded this sally, and mightily diverted the young lords, who conversed together with a great deal of vivacity, until their discourse was interrupted by Gregorio Rodriguez, who returned with a little old man, almost quite bald. Don Antonio would have gone away, saying, "Adieu, Don Matthias, I shall see you by and by: at present, you have, doubtless, some serious affair to discuss with these gentlemen."—"O! not at all, (replied my master) stay, it is no secret. That discreet old person whom you see is an honest man, who lends me money at the rate of twenty per cent."—"How? twenty per cent (cried Centelles, with an air of astonishment.) Egad, I congratulate thee upon being in such good hands! I am not so kindly dealt with, and may say that I purchase silver at the price of gold; I commonly borrow at the rate of forty in the hundred."—"Heavens! what extortion, (exclaimed the old usurer) do these knaves ever think of another world? I am not at all surprised at the hue and cry raised against people who lend upon interest; it is

the exorbitant profit which some exact that ruins our honour and reputation. If all my brethren were like me, we should not be so much reviled: for my sole view in lending is to befriend my fellow creatures. Ah! if times were as they have been, I would offer you my purse without interest: and truly, in spite of the present scarcity I can hardly prevail upon myself to take twenty per cent. But, for my part, I believe money has retired again within the bowels of the earth: there is no such thing to be had: for which reason I am obliged to retrench my benevolence.

"How much do you want?" (added he, addressing himself to my master.) "I must have two hundred pistoles," (replied Don Matthias.) "Here are four hundred in a bag, (said the usurer) you shall have one half." So saying, he pulled from under his cloak a blue bag, which seemed to be the very same which the peasant Talego had left with the five hundred pistoles in the hands of Rodriguez. I soon knew what to think of the matter, and found that Matthias had not praised the steward's understanding without cause. The old man having emptied the bag on the table, began to count the money; my master was inflamed with desire of possession at the sight; and struck with the totality of the sum, said to the usurer, "Signor Descomulgado, I have made a very wise reflection, truly! What a fool I am! to borrow no more than what is absolutely necessary to disengage my parole, without considering that I have not a penny in my purse. I shall be obliged to have recourse to you to-morrow; therefore, to spare you the trouble of coming back, I think it will not be amiss to pocket the whole four hundred."—"My lord, (said the usurer) a part of this money was designed for a good licentiate, who has some fat benefices, which he charitably employs in persuading young girls to retire from the world, and in furnishing their retreats. But, since you have

occasion for the whole sum, it is at your service all that I desire is sufficient security."—"Oh! as for security, (said Rodriguez, interrupting him, and taking a paper out of his pocket) you shall be satisfied; here is an order to be signed by Don Matthias, for five hundred pistoles, upon one of his tenants, called Talego, a rich farmer of Mondejan."—"Very well, (replied the usurer) I never make many words." Upon which the steward presented a pen to his master, who without reading the order, set his name to the bottom, whistling all the while.

This affair being ended, the old man took his leave of my patron, who ran and embraced him, saying, "Till our next meeting, Signor usurer, I am wholly yours: I don't know why people of your profession are branded with the name of rogues: for my own part, I think you are very necessary and serviceable to society: you are the consolation of a thousand heirs, and the resource of all those lords whose expence exceeds their income."—"Thou art in the right, (cried Centelles) usurers are very honest people, whom we never can honour enough: I will, in my turn, embrace this gentleman, on account of his twenty per cent." With these words, he approached and hugged the old man; and these two beaus, for their diversion, began to push him backward and forward one to another, like a ball between two tennis players. After he had been tossed to and fro a good while, they let him go with the steward, who was more deserving than he of their embraces, and of something else also.

Rodrigues and his understrapper being gone, Don Matthias sent the half of his pistoles to the Countess of Pedrosa by the footman who was present, and secured the rest in a long, embroidered, silk purse, which he commonly wore in his pocket. Very well satisfied in seeing himself in cash, he said to Don Antonio, with a gay air, "What shall

we do to-day? Let us consult about it."—"You speak like a sensible man (replied Centelles;) with all my heart, let us deliberate." While they were considering how to spend the day, two other lords arrived: these were Don Alexo Segiar and Don Fernando de Gamboa, both of them about the age of my master, that is, between eight-and-twenty and thirty. These four cavaliers, at meeting, hugged one another so heartily, that one would have thought they had not met for ten years before; then Don Fernando, who was a jovial companion, addressing himself to Don Matthias and Don Antonio, said, "Gentlemen, where do you intend to dine to-day? If you are not engaged, I'll conduct you to a tavern where you shall drink nectar. I supped there last night, and left it only this morning between five and six o'clock."—"Would to heaven (cried my master) that I had done the same: in which case, I should not have lost my money."

"As for me (said Centelles) I treated myself last night with a new diversion; for I love variety in my pleasures, which alone makes life agreeable. A friend of mine carried me to the house of a farmer of the revenue, a gentleman who does his own business together with that of the state. There I saw magnificence and taste, the entertainment being elegant enough. But I was mightily diverted with the ridiculous behaviour of the tax-gatherer himself, who, though the most plebeian of his class, assumed the man of quality: and his wife, though horribly ugly, affected the airs of a beauty, and said a thousand silly things, seasoned with the Biscayan accent, which rendered them still more remarkably foolish. Besides there were at table, four or five children, with their tutor; so that you may easily conceive how I was diverted with this family supper."

"And I, gentlemen, (said Don Alexo Segiar) supped at the house of Arsenia the actress. We

were six in all; Arsenia, Florimonda, with a coquette of her acquaintance, the Marquis of Zeneta, Don Juan of Moncada, and your humble servant. We spent the night in drinking and speaking bawdy. Heavens! what pleasure! 'Tis true, indeed, Arsenia and Florimonda have not much genius, but their wantonness supplies the place of wit. They are merry, brisk, romping creatures, and I love them a thousand times better than your precise women of sense."

CHAPTER IV.

In this manner did these lords continue the conversation, until Don Matthias, whom, in the mean time, I helped to dress, was ready to go abroad. Then he bade me follow him, and all the beaus together set out for the tavern, to which Don Fernando de Gamboa had proposed to conduct them. As I walked in the rear, in company with three other valets (for each of the cavaliers had one) I observed, not without wonder, that these three domestics, copied the air and manner of their respective masters. Having saluted them as their new comrade, they returned the civility, and one among them, after having observed me some minutes, said, "Brother, I perceive that you have never as yet served a young lord."—"No, indeed (answered I) it is not long since I came to Madrid."—"So I suppose, (replied he;) you smell strong of the country: you seem timorous and awkward, and there is a stiffness in your behaviour: but no matter, we will soon polish you, take my word."—"I am afraid you flatter me," (said I to him.)—"Not at all (he replied,) if you was the greatest

blockhead in the universe, we shall be able to make you pass, you may depend upon it."

This was enough to make me understand that my confederates were brave lads, and that I could not be in better hands, in order to become a pretty fellow. When we arrived at the tavern, we found an entertainment ready, which Signor Don Fernando had the precaution to bespeak in the morning; our masters sat down to table, and we stood ready to serve them: then they began to talk with such gaiety, that I was delighted to hear them. I was very much diverted with their different characters, thoughts, and expressions: their fire, their sallies of imagination, made me believe them a new species of men. When the dessert was upon the table, we brought in a great number of bottles of the best Spanish wine; and left them to go and dine by ourselves in a little hall, where the cloth was laid on purpose.

I soon perceived that the knights, my companions, had more merit than I at first imagined: they not only assumed the manners of their masters, but even affected their very language; and these rascals succeeded so well, that (the quality air excepted) there was no difference: I admired their free and easy deportment; was charmed with their wit, and despaired of ever being so agreeable. The valet of Don Fernando (because his master treated ours) performed the honours of the banquet; and that nothing might be wanting, called the landlord, saying, "Master Andrew Mantuano, give us ten bottles of your very best wine, and, according to custom, add them to my master's bill."—"With all my heart, (replied the landlord) but, Mr. Gaspard, you know that signor Don Fernando owes me a good many entertainments already: and if by your means I could touch a little money—" —"Oh! (said the valet, interrupting him) give yourself no trouble about what he owes you: I'll answer for it: my master's debts are as good as

gold: 'tis true, indeed, some unmannerly creditors have seized our rents; but we shall obtain a replevy very soon; and then we shall discharge our bill without so much as examining the articles." Mantuano brought the wine, notwithstanding the rents being seized: and we drank it in expectation of the replevy. It was a good jest to see us, every moment, toasting one another, under the surnames of our masters: Don Antonio's valet giving the name of Gamboa to Don Fernando's servant, and Don Fernando's footman honouring Don Antonio's valet with that of Centelles: they called me Silva, and by degrees we got as drunk under those borrowed names as our masters, to whom they properly belonged.

Though I did not shine so much as my companions, they did not fail to express their approbation of me. "Silva, (said one of the archest among them) we shall make something of thee, my friend: I perceive thou hast a fund of genius, but dost not know how to use it to advantage. The fear of speaking nonsense hinders thee from talking at a venture; and yet, by this alone, a thousand people now-a-days acquire the reputation of wits. If thou hast a mind to shine, give the rein to thy vivacity, and indifferently risk every thing that comes uppermost.—Thy blunders will pass for a noble boldness: and if, after having uttered a thousand impertinences, one witticism escapes thee, the silly things will be forgot, the lucky thought will be remembered, and the world will conceive an high opinion of thy merit. This is what our masters practise with such success; and what every man must do who aspires to the reputation of a distinguished wit."

Besides that I was but too fond of passing for a fine genius, the secret which he had disclosed to me seemed so easy, that I was resolved not to neglect it. I put it instantly to the proof, and the wine I had drank contributed to its success; that

is, I spoke at random, and had the good fortune to throw out, among a great deal of nonsense, some flashes of wit, by which I acquired great applause. This coup d'essai filled me with confidence: I collected all my vivacity to produce some bright sally, and chance befriended me in the attempt.

"Well (said he, who spoke to me in the street) don't you begin to get rid of your rust? Thou hast not been two hours in our company, and art already quite another man. Thou wilt improve visibly every day. See what it is to serve people of quality: it elevates the mind; while the being valet to citizens has a quite contrary effect."—"Doubtless (answered I) and therefore I will henceforth consecrate my service to the nobility."—"That's nobly said (cried Don Fernando's valet, half-seas over) it does not belong to your citizens to possess such superior geniuses as we are. Come, therefore, gentlemen (added he) let us take an oath never to serve such rapscallions, and swear to it by the river Styx." We laughed heartily at Gaspard's conceit, which we approved of very much, and took the burlesque oath with our glasses in our hands.

Thus we continued at table until our masters were pleased to retire, which was about midnight; a circumstance which my companions looked upon as an excess of sobriety. 'Tis true, indeed, these young lords left the tavern in such good time, only with a view to visit a famous coquette who lived at the court-end of the town, and kept open house for young men of pleasure by night as well as by day. She was between thirty and forty years old, still extremely handsome, agreeable, and so consummate in the art of pleasing, that (it was said) she sold the remains of her beauty at a higher price than that which she had received for its first-fruits. There were always in her house two or three other courtezans of the first rank, who contributed not a little to the great concourse of lords who frequented it. They went to play in the afternoon, then

supped, and spent the night in drinking and making merry. Here our masters staid till morning, and we also, without feeling the time lie heavy on our hands; for while they diverted themselves with the mistresses, we amused ourselves with the maids, and at last departed all together at break of day, every one going to bed at his own home.

My master, getting up as usual about noon, dressed himself, and went out. I followed him to the house of Don Antonio Centelles, where we found one Don Alvaro de Acunha, an old gentleman, and professed rake. All the young sparks who had an ambition to become fine gentlemen, put themselves under his tuition; by which they were formed for pleasure, taught to make a figure in the world, and to spend their fortunes with a good grace, he himself being under no apprehension of squandering away his own, which was gone long ago. The three cavaliers having saluted one another, Centelles said to my master, "Faith, Don Matthias, thou couldest not come at a better time; Don Alvaro is going to carry me to the house of a citizen who has invited the Marquis of Zeneta and Don Juan de Moncada to dinner, and thou shalt be of the party."—"What is the name of this citizen?" (said Don Matthias.)—"He is called Gregorio de Noriega (replied don Alvaro) and I will, in two words, give you a character of the man. His father, who is a rich jeweller, having gone abroad to negociate his affairs, left him the enjoyment of a large income; but Gregorio is a fool, who has a disposition prone to spend his estate, in doing which he affects the beau, and would fain pass for a man of spirit, in spite of nature. As he begged me to take him under my direction, I govern him at present: and I can assure you, gentlemen, he is in a fair way; his finances being already pretty well sunk."—"I don't at all doubt it (cried Centelles:) I see him already at the work-house. Come, Don Matthias, let us

make an acquaintance with him, that we may have some share in his ruin."—"With all my heart (replied my master.) I love dearly to see the fortunes of these little upstart gentlemen overturned, because they vainly pretend to rival us in splendour. Nothing, for example, ever gave me so much diversion as the misfortune of that publican's son, who was, by his inclination for play, and his vanity in aping the great, obliged to sell all, to his very house."—"Oh! as for him (said Don Antonio) he deserves no compassion; for he is as great a coxcomb in his adversity as he was in high life."

Centelles and my master repairing with Don Alvaro to the house of Gregorio de Noriega, Mogicon and I went thither also, both of us ravished to find a feast going forward, and to have an opportunity of contributing, on our parts, to the ruin of a citizen. As we went in, we perceived several people busy in dressing the dinner; and the ragouts they were preparing sent forth a savoury steam, that very much prepossessed the smell in favour of the taste. The Marquis of Zeneta and Don Juan de Moncada arrived, and the entertainer seemed to be a great booby, who attempted in vain to assume the carriage of a beau, being a very bad copy of these excellent originals; or rather a downright simpleton, who affected an air of understanding. Imagine to yourself a man of this character in the midst of five jokers, whose sole aim was to exercise their raillery upon him, and engage him in insupportable expence. "Gentlemen (said Don Alvaro, after the first compliments) I present to you Signor Gregorio de Noriega, as a complete cavalier. Besides a thousand other excellent qualifications, he possesses an understanding so exquisitely cultivated, that you cannot take him amiss. He is equally strong on all subjects, from the most close and subtle logic down to the art of spelling."—"Oh! now you flatter me (said the citizen, interrupting him with a very foolish laugh.) Signor Alvaro, I

may with more justice return the compliment; for you are, as one may say, a very draw-well of erudition."—"I had no design (replied Don Alvaro) to fish for such a genteel repartee; but, upon my word, gentlemen, Signor Gregorio cannot fail of acquiring great reputation in the world."—"For my own part (said Don Antonio) what I am most charmed with, and what I greatly prefer to his knowledge in orthography, is the judicious choice he makes of his company: instead of confining himself to the conversation of citizens, he cultivates acquaintance with none but young lords, without giving himself any trouble about the expence attending it. There is in this conduct an elevation of sentiment, and it may be called spending one's money with taste and discernment."

These ironical praises were followed by a thousand more of the same sort, and poor Gregorio was spared by none of them; each of the beaus, in his turn, breaking his jest, the meaning of which the fool did not perceive. On the contrary, he took every thing in a literal sense, and appeared very happy in his guests; nay, he seemed even pleased with being turned into ridicule: and, in short, served them as a butt during the whole time of dinner. They staid with him the remaining part of the day, and all night long; whilst we drank at discretion as well as our masters; and by the time they took leave of the citizen, we were all in an excellent trim.

CHAPTER V.

After having refreshed myself with some hours of sleep, I got up in good humour; and remembering the advice I had received from Melen-

dez, went (my master not being yet awake) and presented my respects to the steward, whose vanity seemed not a little flattered with this instance of my regard. He received me very graciously, and asked if I was not yet familiarized to the way of living practised among young noblemen. I replied, that though it was quite new to me as yet, I did not despair of being reconciled to it in time.

And truly this happened very soon; for my humour and disposition suffered a thorough change. From being sedate and pensive, I became a brisk, blundering coxcomb; and the valet of Don Antonio complimented me on my metamorphosis, saying, that there was now nothing wanting to make me illustrious but an intrigue; which, he affirmed, was absolutely necessary towards finishing the character of a pretty fellow, all our comrades being beloved by some fair lady, and he alone being in possession of the good graces of no less than two women of quality. I believed the rogue told a lie, and said to him, "Monsieur Mogicon, to be sure you are a handsome young fellow, who have a great deal of wit and merit; but I cannot conceive how ladies of quality (especially as you don't live among such) can allow themselves to be charmed by a man of your condition."—"Why truly (said he) they don't know who I am.—I make all my conquests in the dress and even in the name of my master. I'll tell you how: I dress myself like a young nobleman; I assume his behaviour, and go out to take the air; I ogle all the women I see, until I meet with one who returns the leer: her I follow, and find means to speak with. I call myself Don Antonio de Centelles, and demand an assignation, upon which the lady stands upon ceremony: I press her to comply; she yields, et cætera.—By this conduct, my child (added he) I have succeeded in my intrigues, and I advise thee to follow my example."

I was too ambitious of making a figure, not to

listen to this advice, and besides felt no aversion to a love intrigue: I therefore resolved to disguise myself like a young nobleman, and go in quest of amorous adventures; but as I durst not dress myself in our own house, for fear of being observed, I took a rich suit of clothes from my master's wardrobe, and, making it up in a bundle, carried it to the house of a little barber, a friend of mine, where I thought I could dress and undress with more convenience. There I adorned myself to the best of my power, the barber lending a helping hand, in order to set me off; and when we imagined it was impossible to add any thing to my appearance, I walked towards St. Jerome's meadow; from whence I was persuaded I should not return without having found some intrigue to my liking: but before I was obliged to go so far from home, I started one of a very brilliant expectation.

As I was crossing a bye-street, I saw a lady richly dressed, and perfectly genteel, come out of a small house, and get into a hackney-coach that stood before the door; upon which, stopping short to gaze, I bowed to her in such a manner, as to inform her that I was not at all disgusted at her appearance; and she, to let me see she deserved my notice still more than I imagined, lifted up her veil for a moment, and presented a most agreeable countenance to my view: meanwhile the coach drove off, and I remained in the street, not a little struck with this apparition: "What a charming figure! (said I to myself.) Bless me! this is just what I wanted to complete my character. If the two ladies who are in love with Mogicon are as handsome as this, I pronounce him a lucky knave. I should be charmed with my fate had I such a mistress."

While I made these reflections, I cast my eyes by accident towards the house from whence I had seen this lovely creature come out, and perceived

soon as she appeared in the hall, I began by five or six a-la-mode bows, accompanied with the most fashionable contortions; after which, I approached her with a very familiar air, saying, "My princess, behold a young nobleman, who is enraptured with your beauty. Your image, since yesterday, has incessantly presented itself to my imagination, and expelled a duchess, who had begun to set footing in my heart." "The triumph (answered she, taking off her veil) is too glorious for me, and yet I do not perfectly enjoy it; for you young noblemen are prone to change, and your hearts, they say, are more difficult to keep than quicksilver."—"But, my queen (I replied) let us mind the present only, and let futurity shift for itself: you are handsome, and I amorous; and, if you approve of my passion, let us engage without any further reflection, and embark like sailors, who think only of the pleasures, without perceiving the perils of their voyage."

So saying, I threw myself, in a transport, at the feet of my nymph, and, the better to imitate the beaus, pressed her, in a petulant manner, to make me happy. She seemed a little moved by my entreaties, but thought it was too soon to yield; therefore pushing me gently from her, "Hold (said she) you are too forward, and have the air of a libertine; I am afraid you are no better than a downright rake."—"O fie, Madam! (cried I) sure you cannot hate what all ladies of fashion love: none but tradesmen's wives exclaim against libertinism."—"You are certainly in the right (she replied) and I cannot resist such a convincing reason. It is in vain, I find, to use grimace with noblemen like you; and the women must advance one half of the way. Know then your victory (added she with an appearance of confusion, as if her modesty suffered in the confession:) you have inspired me with sentiments which I never felt before, and I want only to know who you are, that I may determine to choose you for my lover. I



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GIL BLAS. VOL. 1.

GIL BLAS BECOMES A MAN OF GALLANTRY. | GIL BLAS DEVIENT HOMME À BONNES FORTUNES.

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believe you are a young lord, and, moreover, a man of honour. But of this I am not assured; and howsoever I may be prepossessed in your favour, I am resolved not to bestow my affection on a person unknown."

It was then I remembered the expedient of Don Antonio's valet, on the same occasion; and, after his example, having a mind to pass for my master, "Madam, (said I to my widow) I will not refuse to tell you my name, which I need not be ashamed to own—Did you never hear of Don Matthias de Silva?" "Yes (replied she) I have even seen him at the house of a lady, an acquaintance of mine." Although I was pretty well stocked with impudence, this answer disconcerted me a good deal; however, I recollected myself in an instant, and making an effort of genius, to extricate myself, "Well, then, my angel (said I) you know a lord whom—I know also. Since you must have it, I am one of the same family; his grandfather married my grand-uncle's sister-in-law: so that you see we are very nearly related.—My name is Don Cæsar, and I am the only son of the illustrious Don Fernando de Ribera, who was slain fifteen years ago, in a battle that was fought on the frontiers of Portugal. I could describe the action, which was hellishly hot; but that would be losing the precious moments which love prompts us to employ in a more agreeable manner."

After this discourse I became more pressing and passionate: but all to little effect; the favours which my goddess bestowed upon me, only serving to make me sigh after those which she refused: but though the barbarous creature got into her coach that waited at the door, I went home very well satisfied with my good fortune, although I was not yet perfectly happy. If, said I to myself, I have not been able to obtain the height of my wishes, it is because my princess is a lady of rank and delicacy, who thinks it indecent to yield to

my transports during the first interview. The pride of her birth has retarded my happiness, which, however, is only delayed for a few days. Not but that I had always some suspicions, that the whole affair was a well-concerted trick. But I loved to consider it in the most favourable point of view, and to preserve the advantageous opinion I had conceived of the lady, with whom I had agreed to meet again next day; the hope of accomplishing my wishes giving me a taste, by anticipation, of the pleasures I expected to enjoy.

With my fancy full of these smiling images, I returned to the house of my barber, where I changed my dress, and went to wait upon my master at a tennis-court, where I knew he was. I found him engaged in play, and even perceived that he had been lucky; for he was none of those phlegmatic gamesters, who enrich or ruin themselves, without changing a feature. In his prosperity he was full of insulting raillery: but very morose when fortune declared against him. Leaving the tennis-court in great good humour, he went directly to the prince's theatre, and I followed him to the play-house door, where giving me a ducat—"Here, Gil Blas, (said he) since I have been lucky, thou shalt feel the effects of it; go and enjoy thyself with thy companions, and about midnight come to me at the house of Arsenia, where I am to sup with Don Alexo Segiar." So saying, he went in, and I remained thinking how I should spend my ducat, according to the intention of the donor. I was not long in suspense; Clarino, Don Alexo's valet, appeared all of a sudden, and I carried him to the next tavern, where we regaled ourselves till twelve o'clock; and from thence repaired together to the house of Arsenia, where he was likewise ordered to rendezvous. A little lacquey opened the door, and introduced us into a parlour, where the waiting-women of Arsenia and Florimonda sat together, laughing as if for a wager,

while their mistresses entertained our masters above.

The arrival of two merry fellows, who had supped to their satisfaction, could not be disagreeable to chambermaids, especially to those of the actresses; but what was my astonishment, when, in the person of one of them, I beheld my widow! my adorable widow, whom I believed a marchioness, or countess. She seemed no less surprised at seeing her Don Cæsar de Ribera metamorphosed into the valet de chambre of a beau: however we observed one another without being disconcerted; and both at one time were seized with such a violent inclination to laugh, that we could not help indulging it. After which, Laura (so was my princess called) taking me aside, while Clarino made up to her companion, very graciously presented her hand, saying, softly—"Take it, Don Cæsar: instead of reproaching let us compliment one another, my friend: you performed your part to admiration; and I did not behave amiss in mine. What say you? confess that you took me for one of those fine ladies of quality, who amuse themselves with intrigues."—"'Tis true, (answered I) but whosoever you are, my queen, I have not changed my sentiments with my dress: I beg you will accept my services, and allow the valet de chambre of Don Matthias to finish that which Don Cæsar had so happily begun."—"Yes, (said she) I love thee still better in thy own character than in that of another: thou art just such a man as I am a woman, and that is the strongest approbation I can bestow: I therefore receive thee into the crowd of my adorers; we shall have no more occasion for the ministry of the old woman: for thou mayest come hither with the utmost freedom: we ladies of the stage live without constraint, and helter-skelter with the men. The effects of this communication are sometimes very visible indeed; but the town

laughs at them, and our business, thou knowest, is to divert it."

Here we broke off, because there were others present, and the conversation became general, sprightly, joyous, and full of palpable double entendres. Every one bore a part; Arsenia's maid in particular, my lovely Laura, shone very much, and showed a great deal more wit than virtue. On the other hand, our masters and the actresses often burst out into long fits of laughter, which we overheard, and from which we concluded that their discourse was much of the same stamp with our own. If all the fine things which were said that night at Arsenia's had been committed to writing, they would have composed, I believe, a treatise very instructive for youth. In the mean time, the hour of retreat, that is, the dawn arrived, and we were obliged to part. Clarino followed Don Alexo, and I went home with Don Matthias.

CHAPTER VI.

That day, while my master was dressing, he received a billet from Don Alexo Segiar, desiring his company at his house, whither he went, and found with him the Marquis of Zeneta, and another young nobleman of a good mien, whom I had never seen before. "Don Matthias (said Segiar to my master, presenting the unknown cavalier) this is Don Pompeio de Castro, a relation of mine, who has been at the court of Portugal almost from his infancy: he arrived at Madrid last night, and will set out to-morrow for Lisbon, so that, as he can spare me only one day, I am resolved to enjoy the precious opportunity, and, in order to make it the more agreeable to him, have called you and

the Marquis of Zeneta to my assistance." Upon this, my master and Don Alexo's kinsman embraced and complimented one another, and I was much pleased with the discourse of Don Pompeio, who seemed to have a great share of judgment and penetration.

Having dined at Segiar's, these noblemen amused themselves at cards till the hour of going to the play; and then went all together to the prince's theatre, to see a new tragedy, intitled The Queen of Carthage. After the representation of the piece, they returned, and supped where they had dined: the conversation, at first, turning on the piece they had seen performed, and afterwards upon the actors. "As for the work itself (cried Don Matthias) I have no great opinion of it; it makes Æneas still more insipid than he is represented in the Æneid; but every body must agree it was divinely played. What says Signor Don Pompeio? He does not seem to be of my way of thinking."—"Gentlemen (said that cavalier, smiling) I have perceived you so much charmed with your players, and, in particular, with your actresses, that I ought not to be so bold as to signify my dissent from your opinions."—"You are much in the right (said Don Alexo, in a jocular manner) your censures will be very unseasonable here; and you ought to show some respect for our actresses before us, who are the trumpets of their reputation. As we drink with them every day, we can do no less than warrant them perfect in their vocation; and even give them certificates if there be occasion for it."—"I do not at all doubt it (answered his relation) and I dare say you would do the same for their morals, so much are you their friends."

"Your comedians at Lisbon (said the Marquis of Zeneta, with a sneer) are, doubtless much better than ours."—"Yes, certainly (replied Don Pompeio) at least, there are some of them who have no defect."—"And these (resumed the Marquis)

may depend upon your certificate."—"I have no connection with them (said Don Pompeio) and, as I never enter into their parties of pleasure, can judge of their merit without prejudice. But do you really (added he) think your company so excellent?"—"No, faith! (said the Marquis) I believe no such thing; and provided you give me leave to defend a very small number of the players, I will willingly give up all the rest. Won't you allow that she who played the part of Dido is an admirable actress? Did she not represent the queen with all the dignity and grace which is conformable to the idea we have of her? and did not you admire her art in engaging the mind of the spectator, and making him feel the emotions of all those passions that are expressed? She may be said to be consummately skilled in all the refinements of declamation."—"I agree (said Don Pompeio) that she knows how to awake and touch the passions of the audience; no player had ever more feeling, and, on the whole, her representation is very fine. I was shocked with two or three things in her performance. When she would express surprise she rolls her eyes in such an extravagant manner, as very ill becomes the deportment of a princess. Add to this, that in raising her voice, which is naturally low, she corrupts the sweetness of it, and produces a very disagreeable croaking: besides, in more places than one, she gave reason to suspect that she did not very well understand her part: but, however, I am inclined to impute this rather to inattention than want of capacity."

"By what I can see (said Don Matthias to the critic) you will scarce write a panegyric on our actresses."—"Pardon me (replied Don Pompeio) I can discover great talents through their defects. I own I was enchanted with that actress who performed the part of a chambermaid in the interludes: she has a fine genius, treads the stage gracefully, and every witticism she utters is seasoned with a

sarcastic smile, full of charms, which very much enhances the value of what is said. She may, indeed, be blamed for indulging her fire sometimes a little too much, and transgressing the bounds of modest assurance. But we must not be too severe; and I could only wish that she would correct one bad habit she has contracted. Oft times, in the middle of a serious scene, she interrupts the performance all of a sudden, by yielding to a silly desire of laughing, with which she is seized. You'll say she is applauded by the pit, even at these times: there, I own, she is lucky."

"Well, what do you think of the men? (said the Marquis, interrupting him) surely you'll charge them full volley, since you have been so unmerciful to the women."—"No (said Don Pompeio) I think you have some promising young actors; and am particularly pleased with that fat comedian who acted the part of Dido's prime minister: he repeats very naturally, and declaims just as they do in Portugal."—"If he can please you (said Segiar) you must be charmed with the action of him who played the part of Æneas. Is not he a great comedian! an original!"—"Very original! (replied the critic) his cadence is quite peculiar, and his tones abundantly shrill: he almost always deserts nature, hurries over the words which contain the sentiment, and places the emphasis where it should not be; making pauses even on articles and conjunctions. He diverted me very much; particularly when he expressed to his confidant the violence he did himself in abandoning the princess; never was grief more comically expressed."—"Softly, cousin (replied Don Alexo) thou wilt make us believe, by and by, that there is not a great deal of taste at the court of Portugal. Dost thou know that the actor of whom we speak is reckoned a phœnix? Didst thou not hear what claps of applause he obtained? A plain proof that he is far from being contemptible."—"That is no proof at all (answered

Don Pompeio.) Gentlemen (added he) let us not, I beg of you, lay any stress upon the applause of the pit, which is often bestowed very unseasonably: —nay, more seldom on true merit than on false, as Phædrus observes, by an ingenious fable, which I beg leave to repeat. Here it is—

"The inhabitants of a certain city being assembled in public to see pantomimes, there was among the performers a favorite actor, whom they applauded every moment. This buffoon, having a mind to close the scene with a new kind of representation, appeared alone upon the stage, stooped down, covering his head with his cloak, and squeaking like a pig, acquitted himself so well, that the audience actually imagined he had one under his clothes: they ordered him therefore to strip; which he having done, and nothing appearing, the whole assembly thundered applause.—A peasant who happened to be one of the spectators, shocked at these expressions of admiration, cried, 'Gentlemen, you have no cause to be charmed with that buffoon, who is not such an exquisite actor as you imagine: I can play the pig better than he, and, if you doubt it, come hither again to-morrow at this hour.' The people, prepossessed in favor of their pantomimes, reassembled next day in greater numbers, rather to hiss the peasant than see what he could do. The two rivals appearing on the stage, the buffoon began, and was applauded more than ever: then the countryman, stooping in his turn, and muffling his head in his cloak, pinched the ear of a real pig, which he held under his arm, and made it squeak most piercingly; nevertheless, the audience gave the preference to the pantomime, and hooted the peasant, who all of a sudden producing the pig to the spectators, 'Gentlemen (said he,) it is not me whom you hiss, but this poor pig himself: such excellent judges you are!'"

"Cousin (said Alexo) thy fable is too severe: but nothwithstanding thy pig, we will not give up

our opinion. Let us change the discourse (added he) I am tired of this subject. So, thou wilt depart to-morrow, in spite of my desire to enjoy thy company a little longer?"—"I wish I could make a longer stay at Madrid (replied his kinsman) but it is not in my power. I have told you already, that I came to the court of Spain about an affair of state; and, at my arrival yesterday, had an audience of the prime minister, whom I shall see again to-morrow morning; immediately after which I shall set out on my return to Lisbon."—"Thou art become altogether Portuguese (said Segiar) and in all likelihood wilt never return to live in Madrid."—"I believe I shall not (answered Don Pompeio) for I am so happy as to be beloved by the king of Portugal, and enjoy a great deal of pleasure at his court. But notwithstanding his kindness to me, would you believe that I have been on the point of quitting his dominions for ever?"—"Pray tell us the reason (said Don Alexo.)"—"With all my heart (answered Don Pompeio) and at the same time will relate the story of my life."

CHAPTER VII.

Don Ramoas's life

Don Alexo (added he) knows that while I was yet a little boy I resolved to carry arms; and that, seeing our own country in profound peace, I went to Portugal, from whence I passed over into Africa with the duke of Braganza, who gave me employment in the army under his command. Being a younger brother of very small fortune, I was under a necessity of signalizing myself in such a manner as to attract the notice of the general; and did my duty so well, that the duke promoted and put me into a condition to serve with honour. After a long

war, the issue of which you all know, I attached myself to the court; and the king, upon the recommendation of the general officers, gratified me with a considerable pension. Sensible of this monarch's generosity, I lost no occasion of manifesting my gratitude by my assiduity; and was always in attendance at those hours in which people are permitted to pay their respects; by which behaviour I insensibly acquired the love of that prince, who honoured me with new favours.

Having one day distinguished myself at the ring, and a bull fight that preceded it, the whole court commended my strength and address; and when I returned home, loaded with applause, I found a billet importing that a lady, the conquest of whom ought to flatter me more than all the honour I had that day acquired, wanted to converse with me; and that I should in the twilight repair to a certain place that was described. This letter gave me more pleasure than all the praise I had received, and I imagined that the person who wrote it must be a lady of the first quality. You may easily guess that I flew to the rendezvous, where an old woman being in waiting, to serve as a guide, introduced me by a little garden-door into a great house, and shut me in a rich closet, saying, "Stay here until I inform my mistress of your arrival." I perceived a great many curious things in this closet, which was enlightened by a great number of wax-candles; but my sole view in considering its magnificence was to confirm myself in the opinion I had already conceived of the lady's rank. If all that I saw seemed to assure me she was a person of the first quality, when she appeared I was convinced of it, by her noble and majestic air. Nevertheless I was mistaken.

"Signor cavalier (said she) after the advances I have made, it would be ridiculous to conceal the tender sentiments I have for you, which, however, were not inspired by that merit you have this day

shown before the whole court. That has only hastened the discovery: for I have seen you more than once, and enquired into your character, which pleased me so much that I determined to follow my inclination. Don't imagine (added she) that you have made a conquest of some duchess. I am no other than the widow of a simple officer of the king's guards: but what makes your victory still more glorious, is the preference I give you to one of the greatest lords of the kingdom. The Duke of Almeyda is in love with me, and spares nothing to inflame me with a mutual passion; but hitherto he has been unsuccessful, and I suffer his addresses only through vanity."

Though I found by her discourse that I had to do with a coquette, I thought myself very much obliged to fortune for this adventure; Donna Hortensia (so was the lady called) was still in the prime of youth; and I was dazzled with her beauty: besides, she offered me the possession of a heart which would not yield to the addresses of a duke. What a triumph was this for a young Spanish cavalier! I accordingly threw myself at her feet, thanked her for her goodness, said all that a man of gallantry could utter on such an occasion, and she had reason to be satisfied with the transports of my gratitude. We parted the best friends in the world, after having agreed to see one another every night on which she should be disengaged from the Duke of Almeyda, and this she promised to advertise me of punctually; in which she did not fail: so that, in a word, I became the Adonis of this new Venus.

But the pleasures of life are far from being eternal! Whatever measures the lady could take to conceal our correspondence from my rival, he did not fail to get notice of the whole of what it was so much our interest to keep from his knowledge. A malcontent chambermaid informed him of the affair; and that lord, naturally generous,

but withal haughty, jealous, and passionate, was incensed at my presumption: rage and jealousy took possession of his soul; and following the dictates of his fury, he resolved to avenge himself of me in an infamous manner. One night, while I was with Hortensia, he waited for me at the little garden-door, attended by all his footmen, armed with clubs; and as soon as I came out, making these wretches seize me, ordered them to cudgel me to death. "Strike (said he,) and let the audacious villain perish under your hands; for so am I resolved to punish his insolence." He had no sooner spoke these words than his people assaulted me all together, and gave me so many blows, that I lay stretched upon the ground without sense or motion. After which they retired with their master, who had regaled himself with this cruel execution; and I remained as they left me during the rest of the night. At break of day some people happened to pass, and perceiving still some life in me, were so charitable as to carry me to the house of a surgeon: luckily my wounds were not mortal, and I fell into the hands of a skilful artist, who made a perfect cure of me in two months; at the end of which time I repaired again to court, and resumed my former way of living, save that I never went back to Hortensia, who on her part took no step to see me again, because the duke on these terms had pardoned her infidelity.

My adventure being universally known, and nobody suspecting my courage, every one was astonished to see me as tranquil as if I had not received an affront; for I imparted my thoughts to no man breathing, and seemed to be void of all resentment; so that people did not know what to think of my feigned insensibility. Some believed that, notwithstanding my courage, the rank of my antagonist kept me in awe, and obliged me to digest the injury; others, with more reason, suspected my silence, and looked upon the peaceful

appearance I put on as a deceitful calm. Of this opinion was the king, who did not think me a person that would leave such an outrage unpunished; but believed that I could not fail to revenge myself as soon as I could find a favourable opportunity. That he might know whether or not he guessed my sentiments aright, he called me one day into his closet, where he said, "Don Pompeio, I know the accident which has happened to you, and am, I confess, surprised at your tranquillity, which must certainly be dissimulation."—"Sire (I replied,) I know not who was the agressor, having been attacked in the dark by people unknown; so that I must console myself for the misfortune as well as I can."—"No, no, (said the king) you must not think to dupe me with that evasion, which is all dissembled: I have been informed of the whole affair: the Duke of Almeyda has given you a mortal affront. You are a gentleman and a Castilian, and I know what these qualities oblige you to do. You have formed a resolution to avenge yourself. Communicate your scheme to me. I insist upon it, and don't be afraid that you shall have cause to repent of making me your confidant."

"Since your majesty (answered I) commands it, I will discover my sentiments. Yes, Sire, I intend to take vengeance for the affront I have suffered. Every one who bears the name of a gentleman is accountable for it to his family. You know the unworthy treatment I have received; and I purpose to assassinate the Duke of Almeyda, to revenge myself in a manner suitable to the offence. I will plunge a poignard into his breast, or shoot him through the head, and escape if I can into Spain. This is my design."—"It is a violent one (said the king) nevertheless I cannot condemn it, after the cruel outrage which the Duke of Almeyda has committed upon you. He is worthy of the chastisement you reserve for him: but do not execute

your enterprise in a hurry. Leave it to me to find out an expedient for bringing you to an accommodation."—"Ah, Sir! (cried I, very much chagrined) why did you oblige me to reveal my secret? What expedient can—"—"If I don't find one to your satisfaction (said he, interrupting me) you may put your resolution in practice. I don't intend to abuse the confidence you have reposed in me, and will by no means betray your honour. So that you may make yourself easy on that score."

I was greatly at a loss to know in what manner the king intended to terminate the affair in an amicable manner: and this is the method he took. In a private conversation with the Duke of Almeyda, "My lord (said he) you have injured Don Pompeio de Castro; and as you are not ignorant of his being a man of illustrious birth, and a gentleman whom I love on account of his faithful services, you ought to give him satisfaction."—"I am not of an humour to refuse it; (answered the duke) if he complains of my wrath, I am ready to do him justice in the field."—"You must give him another sort of reparation (replied the king;) a Spanish gentleman understands the point of honour too well to fight openly with a secret assassin. I can give you no other name, and you cannot expiate the indignity of your action any other way than by presenting your enemy with a cane, and submitting to a retaliation."—"O heavens! (cried the Duke) What, Sir! would you have a man of my rank condescend to humble himself before a simple cavalier, and allow himself to be caned?"—"No, (replied the monarch) I will make Don Pompeio promise that he will not strike you. Only ask pardon for the violence you committed, and present him with a cane—that is all I expect of you."—"And that is too much to expect from me, Sir, (said the Duke interrupting him hastily) I will rather continue exposed to the secret shafts of his revenge."—"Your life is dear to me (said the

king) and my desire is that this affair may have no bad consequences. To bring it to a conclusion the less disagreeable for you, I will be the only witness to that satisfaction which I insist on your making to the Spaniard."

The king had occasion for all his power over the duke, to bring him to this mortifying condescension. However, he succeeded; and afterwards sending for me, recounted the discourse he had with my enemy, and asked if I would be satisfied with the reparation agreed upon between them. I answered in the affirmative, and gave my word and honour, that, far from striking the offender, I would not even accept of the cane he should present to me. Things being regulated in this manner, the duke and I, one day, went at a certain hour to the king, who shutting himself up with us in the closet, "Come (said he to the duke) acknowledge your fault, and deserve to be forgiven." Upon this my enemy made his apology, and presented me with a cane which he had in his hand. "Don Pompeio (said the monarch to me, that instant) take the cane, and let not my presence hinder you from satisfying your injured honour: I acquit you of the promise you made, not to strike the duke."—"No, Sir, (answered I) it is sufficient that he submits to be beaten; an injured Spaniard asks no more."—"Well, (replied the king) since you are contented with that satisfaction, you may now enjoy the privilege of a regular process: measure your swords, and determine your quarrel like men of honour." "It is what I ardently desire! (cried the Duke of Almeyda, with precipitation) and that alone is capable of consoling me for the shameful condescension I have made."

So saying, he went away full of rage and confusion, and two hours after sent to let me know that he waited for me in a private place. Thither I repaired, and found that lord in a humour to fight heartily. He was not quite forty, and wanted

neither courage nor skill, so that the match was pretty equal. "Come, Don Pompeio (said he) let us decide our difference here: both of us ought to be exasperated to the highest pitch; you, for the treatment you have received at my hands; and I, for having asked your pardon." With these words he drew upon me so suddenly, that I had not time to make any reply, and pushed with great vigour; but I had the good fortune to parry all his thrusts, and attacked him in my turn; when I found I had to do with an antagonist who knew how to defend as well as to assault; and I don't know what might have happened, if he had not made a false step in retreating, and fallen backward. I stopped immediately, and bid him get up —and he answered, "Why do you spare me? I am injured by your pity."—"I will not wrong my glory so much (said I) as to take the advantage of your misfortune; get up once more, and let us fight it out."

"Don Pompeio (said he, rising) after this instance of your generosity, honour will not permit me to use my sword against you. What would the world say of me should I kill you? I should be looked upon as a coward, who had taken the life of a person who had it in his power to deprive me of mine. I can, therefore, no longer fight against you, and I feel the warm transports of gratitude succeed those furious emotions which reigned within my breast. Don Pompeio (added he) let our mutual hatred cease. Let us even go farther and be friends."—"Ah, my lord, (cried I,) I embrace the agreeable proposal with joy! I vow the most sincere friendship: and, as the first proof, promise never to set foot within the door of Donna Hortensia, even though she should desire to see me."—"It is I (said he) who must yield that lady to you. You have a juster title to her, since her inclination is fixed upon you."—"No, no! (cried I, interrupting him) you love her, and the favours

which she might bestow upon me would give you pain; I sacrifice them, therefore, to your repose." —"Ah, too generous Castilian (replied the duke, locking me in his arms!) I am charmed with your sentiments! What remorse do they produce within me! With what grief—with what shame do I reflect on the outrage you received! The satisfaction I gave you in the king's closet seems now too slight; I will make a better reparation for the injury, and in order to efface the dishonour of it entirely, I offer one of my nieces to you in marriage; she is a rich heiress, not yet fifteen, and still more beautiful than young."

I made my compliments to the duke in such expressions of acknowledgments as the honour of entering into his alliance inspired; and in a few days married his niece. The whole court congratulated him on his generosity to a gentleman whom he had covered with ignominy; and my friends rejoiced with me on the happy conclusion of an adventure which seemed to promise a more melancholy issue. Since that time, gentlemen, I live agreeably at Lisbon, beloved by my wife, of whom I am still fond; the Duke of Almeyda gives me every day fresh proofs of his friendship; and I dare boast of being pretty well with the King of Portugal: the importance of this my journey to Madrid, which I undertook by his order, being a sufficient evidence of his esteem.

CHAPTER VIII.

Such was the story that Don Pompeio recounted, and which the valet of Don Alexo and I overheard, although they had taken the precaution of sending us away before it was begun: but, instead

of retiring, we stopped at the door, which we had left half open, and from thence lost not a word of what was said. After this, the noblemen set in to drinking, but their debauch did not last till day; because Don Pompeio, who was to attend the prime minister in the morning, was very desirous of a little rest. Accordingly, the Marquis of Zeneta and my master embracing that cavalier, bid him adieu, and left him with his kinsman.

We went to bed for this time before morn, and Don Matthias, when we waked, invested me with a new employment. "Gil Blas (said he) take paper and ink, and write two or three letters which I will dictate; henceforward thou art my secretary." —"Good (said I to myself) another addition to my functions: as a lacquey, I follow my master every where; as a valet de chambre, help him to dress; and write under him as his secretary. Heaven be praised! I act, like Hec. *, in a three-fold capacity."—"Thou dost not know (added he) what I am about; which is briefly this—but be secret—for thy life shall answer it. As I sometimes meet with people who boast of their good fortune in love intrigues, I am resolved, in order to excel them all, to have always in my pocket feigned letters from women, which I will read on such occasions. This will afford me some diversion, and, more happy than those of my fellows who acquire conquests only for the pleasure of making them public, I will publish those which I have not had the trouble to make; but remember to disguise thy hand in such a manner, as that the billets may not appear to be written by the same person."

Upon this I took paper, pen, and ink, and sat down to obey Don Matthias, who at first dictated a love-letter in these terms:

"You was not to-night at the place of assignation. Ah, Don Matthias! what can you say to justify yourself? How much have I been mistaken,



R. Smirke R.A. pinx.t A. Raimbach Sculp.t

GIL BLAS. VOL. 1.

THE USURER INTRODUCED TO DON MATTHIAS DE SILVA. | L'USURIER PRÉSENTÉ À DOM MATHIAS DE SILVA.

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and how well have I been punished for having the vanity to think that you would sacrifice all the amusements and business of the gay world, to the pleasure of seeing Donna Clara de Mendoza!"

The next billet he made me write was in the name of a lady, who preferred him to a prince; and the last from one who told him, that, if she was sure of his discretion, she would make a voyage with him to the island of Cythera. He was not satisfied with dictating these fine epistles: he obliged me also to subscribe them with the names of ladies of quality. Upon which I could not help observing, that I thought it a ticklish affair; but he desired me to keep my advice to myself, until he should have occasion to ask it: I was therefore obliged to execute his commands in silence. This being done, he got up, dressed, put the letters in his pocket, and went out; and I followed him to the house of Don Juan de Moncada, who had invited five or six gentlemen of his friends to dinner.

The entertainment was sumptuous; and mirth, the best ingredient in all banquets, reigned during the repast. All the guests contributed to enliven the conversation; some by raillery, and others by recounting exploits of which they themselves were the heroes. My master, unwilling to lose such a fair opportunity of profiting by the letters he had made me write, read them aloud, with such an air of assurance, that (his secretary excepted) every body seemed to believe them genuine.—Among the gentlemen before whom he was guilty of this effrontery, there was one Don Lope de Velasco, a very sedate man, who, instead of rejoicing like the rest at the success of the reader, coldly asked if the conquest of Donna Clara had cost him dear?—"Almost less than nothing (replied Don Matthias) she made all the advances. Having seen me in the park, I happened to please her; upon which I was

followed by her order, and, as soon as she learned who I was, she wrote to me, appointing an assignation at her house in the night, when all the family should be a-bed. I obeyed the summons, and was introduced to her apartment.—I am too much of a gentleman to tell what followed."

At this laconic detail the lord of Velasco changed countenance, and it was not difficult to perceive what concern he had in the lady in question. "All these billets (said he, darting a furious look at my master) are absolutely false, and especially that which you boast of having received from Donna Clara de Mendoza, than whom there is not a more chaste young lady in Spain. A gentleman, no ways your inferior either in birth or personal merit, has done every thing in his power, during two whole years, to make an impression on her heart; and scarce has he been able to obtain the most innocent favours, though he has reason to flatter himself that if she was capable of granting any other kind of indulgence, it would be to him alone."—"Hey-day! who says any thing to the contrary? (said Don Matthias, with an air of raillery.) I agree with you that she is a lady of honour: and, for my part, I am a young fellow of honour; consequently you ought to believe that nothing which was not very honourable passed between us."—"Ah! this is too much (cried Don Lope, interrupting him:) jesting apart, you are an impostor. Donna Clara never made an assignation with you at night; and I will not suffer you to blacken her reputation.—I shall say no more at present." Having thus expressed himself, he looked sternly at the whole company, and retired in such a manner as to make me believe that this affair would have very bad consequences. My master, who was brave enough for a lord of his character, despising the threats of Don Lope, "What a fool there is! (cried he, bursting into a fit of laughter) your knight-errants pretended only to maintain the beauty of their

mistresses; but he, forsooth, must vindicate the chastity of his. Now this to me seems still more extravagant."

Velasco's retreat, which was in vain opposed by Moncada, did not at all disturb the banquet: the cavaliers, without taking much notice of it, continued their mirth, and did not part till next morning at five o'clock, when my master and I went home to bed. I was overwhelmed with drowsiness, and hoped to enjoy a good sleep; but I reckoned without my host, or rather without our porter, who came and waked me an hour after, telling me that there was a young man at the gate, who wanted to speak with me. "Ah! curse thee for a porter (cried I, yawning) dost thou consider that I have just now gone to bed? Tell the young man that I am asleep, and bid him return at another time."—"He must speak with you instantly (replied he) for he assures me that the affair will admit of no delay." At these words I got up, and putting on my breeches and doublet only, went to the door, cursing all the way.—"Friend (said I to the young man who waited for me) let me know, if you please, what pressing affair procures me the honour of seeing you so early in the morning?"—"I have (answered he) a letter for Don Matthias, to be delivered into his own hand. He must read it immediately; for it is of the utmost consequence to him: I beg you will therefore show me into his chamber." Thinking it treated on some very important affair, I took the liberty of waking my master: "I ask pardon, (said I to him) for interrupting your repose; but the importance—" "What wouldst thou have?" (cried he hastily) Upon which the young man who accompanied me said, "My lord, I have a letter for you from Don Lope de Velasco." Don Matthias took, opened, and having read it, said to Don Lope's valet, "Hark'e, child, I would not get up before noon to make one in the best party of pleasure that ever

was proposed; judge, then, if I shall rise at six o'clock in the morning to fight.—Thou may'st tell thy master, if he will be in the same place half an hour after twelve, I will meet him there." So saying, he sunk down in his bed, and fell asleep again with great expedition.

Between eleven and twelve he got up, and, dressing with great composure, went out, telling me he would dispense with my attendance; but I was too curious to know the consequence to obey him in this, and therefore walked at some distance behind him to St. Jerome's meadow, where I perceived Don Lope de Velasco waiting for him in a resolute manner. The better to observe them, I concealed myself, and, from afar, could see them meet, and begin to fight a moment after. The combat was long, each in his turn having pushed his antagonist with great vigour and address: but victory declared for Don Lope, who run my master through the body, and, leaving him stretched upon the ground, made off, very well satisfied with the vengeance he had taken. I ran up to the unfortunate Don Matthias, whom I found without sense, and almost without life. I was melted at the sight, and could not help shedding tears at a death of which I had been an involuntary instrument.—Notwithstanding my grief, however, I did not forget my own little concerns; but returned home with all haste, where (without speaking a syllable of the matter) I made up a bundle of my clothes, among which I threw, by mistake, some of my master's moveables; and, when I had carried it to the barber's house, where I had left my intriguing suit, published through the whole city the fatal accident of which I was witness: I told it to every body who gave me the hearing, and, in particular, took care to inform Rodriguez of what had happened. He seemed less afflicted with the news, than busied about the measures he was to take on this occasion. Having assembled the servants, he ordered them to follow

him; and, repairing in a body to St. Jerome's meadow, we took up our master, who, though he still breathed, died in three hours after he was carried to his own house. Thus perished Don Matthias de Silva, for having taken it into his head to read forged love-letters at an unseasonable time.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days after the funeral of Don Matthias, all his servants being paid and dismissed, I fixed my abode in the house of the little barber, with whom I began to live in strict friendship; and there I promised myself more pleasure than with Melendez. As I did not want money, I was in no hurry to enquire about a new place: besides, I was become nice on that point, and resolved to serve none but the quality for the future; for which reason I intended to examine narrowly into whatever post should occur, believing that there was none too good for me; so much did I then think the valet of a young nobleman preferable to all others.

In the mean time, until fortune should present such a family as I thought I deserved, I imagined nothing could be more agreeable than to consecrate my leisure to my handsome Laura, whom I had not seen since that night when we were both so pleasantly undeceived. I durst not dress in the suit of Don Cæsar de Ribera, which (unless I had assumed it for a disguise) would have made me pass for a downright madman; but my own was still very decent, and being very well equipped in stockings, shoes, and hat, I adjusted myself, with the barber's assistance, in a middle way between Don Cæsar and Gil Blas, and in this condition

repaired to Arsenia's house; where, finding her alone, in the same parlour where I had seen her before, she no sooner perceived me than she cried, "Ha! are you there? I thought I had lost you Seven or eight days are passed since I gave you the permission of visiting me: I see you don't abuse the liberties in which the ladies indulge you."

I excused myself on account of my master's death, and the business in which I had been engaged; and added in a very polite manner, that even in the midst of all my cares the fair Laura had still kept possession of my heart. "Well, then (said she) I will reproach you no more; but own, that I had also thought of you: and as soon as I heard of the misfortune of Don Matthias, formed a project which, perhaps, will not displease you.—Some time ago I heard my mistress say, that she wanted to have a kind of steward in the house: a young man who should understand economy, and keep an exact account of the money disbursed for housekeeping. I have cast my eyes on your lordship, and believe you would not be an improper person for that employment."—"I perceive (answered I) that I should acquit myself in it to a wonder; for I have read Aristotle's Œconomics; and, as to keeping accounts, it is my chief excellence. But, child (added I) there is one objection to my engaging in Arsenia's service.—"What may that be?" (said Laura.)—"I have sworn (I replied) never to serve a plebeian: nay, I have sworn by Styx; and if Jupiter himself durst not violate that oath, judge if a valet ought not to regard it."—"Whom dost thou call plebeians? (said the chambermaid, with an air of disdain.) Dost thou rank actresses with the wives of counsellors and attorneys? Know, friend, that the ladies of the stage are not only noble, but arch-noble, by the alliance they contract with men of quality."

"If that be the case, my princess (said I) I may accept of the place for which you have destined

me, without derogating from the dignity of my resolution."—"Certainly (she replied) to pass from the family of a beau into the service of a theatrical heroine, is still to maintain the same sphere of life; for we rank in all respects with the quality: we keep equipages like them; we live as well; and, at bottom, ought to hold the same esteem in civil life. Really (added she) if we consider a marquis and a player, through the course of a day, we shall find them upon a pretty equal footing; for, granting that the marquis, during three parts of the day, is, by virtue of his blood, superior to the player; the actor, during the remaining part, is raised still more above the marquis by the cue of an emperor or king whom he represents. This, in my opinion, invests us with such nobility and grandeur as at least equals us to the people at court."—"O! truly (I replied) you are, without contradiction, on a level with the courtiers. What the deuce! players, I find, are not such scums as I imagined; and you fire me with an inclination to serve such honourable people."—"Well, then (said she) come back again in two days: I ask no more time to dispose my mistress for thy reception. I will speak to her in thy behalf; and, as I have some interest with her, I am persuaded that thou wilt be admitted into her service."

I thanked Laura for her friendship, and assured her that I was penetrated with gratitude, which I expressed with such transports as left her no room to doubt my sincerity. We maintained a pretty long conversation together, and it would have lasted longer, had not a little page come to tell my princess, that Arsenia wanted her; upon which we parted. I quitted the house of this actress, in the sweet hope of living in it at my ease in a very short time; and did not fail to return at the time appointed. "I was just expecting thee (said Laura) in order to assure thee that thou art now one of the household: come, follow me, and I will present

thee to my mistress." So saying, she carried me into an apartment, composed of five or six rooms of a floor, each more richly furnished than the other.

Heavens! what luxury and magnificence! I believed myself in the palace of a vice-queen; or rather thought I saw all the riches in the world amassed together in one place: for there was variety of things produced in different nations; and one might term this apartment the temple of some goddess, to whom every traveller presented an offering of the rarities of his country.—I perceived the divinity seated on a large satin couch, charming to the eye, and sleek with the steams of sacrifice: she was in a genteel dishabille, and her fair hands were busy in preparing a new head-dress, in which she was to perform that night. "Madam, (said her maid) here is the housekeeper I mentioned. I can assure you, that you will not find one more for your purpose." Arsenia looked at me very attentively, and I had the good fortune to please her. "Aha! Laura (cried she) there's a pretty young fellow. I foresee that I shall be very well satisfied with him." Then addressing herself to me, "Child (said she) I like your appearance, and am at a word: if you serve me well, you shall have no cause to complain." I answered, that my whole study and endeavour should be to please her: and, seeing that we were agreed, went to fetch my clothes, and was installed in my new office.

CHAPTER X.

It being near play-time, my mistress bid Laura and me follow her to the theatre. We went accordingly to her tiring-room, where she put off her ordinary dress, and took another more magnificent for her appearance on the stage. The curtain being drawn, Laura conducted and sat down by me in a place where we could both see and hear the actors perfectly well. I was disgusted at the greatest part of them, doubtless because Don Pompeio had prejudiced me against them. Several, however, were very much applauded, and among these even some who put me in mind of the fable of the pig.

Laura told me the names of all the actors and actresses as they presented themselves; and, not contented with this, the satirical baggage described their characters nicely, as they appeared. "This here (said she) is a noodle. That fellow is a brute: and that minx whom you see, with an air more lewd than engaging, is called Rosarda; a very bad acquisition for the company! she should be enrolled in the troop that is raising by order of the viceroy of New-Spain, to be transported forthwith into America. Observe that luminous constellation advancing; that fair-setting sun, known by the name of Castilda: if she had exacted a stone from each of her lovers, as a princess of Egypt is said to have done heretofore, she could have raised a pyramid which would have touched the third heaven." In short, Laura gave no quarter: her malicious tongue did not even spare her own mistress.

Nevertheless, I will confess my weakness: I was charmed with my chambermaid, though her character was not morally good. She satirized so agreeably, that I was even in love with her malice. Between the acts she got up, to go and see if Arse-

nia wanted her; but, instead of returning immediately to her place, she amused herself behind the scenes, in listening to the soft things that were said by the men who flattered her. I followed her for once to observe, and perceived that she had a great many acquaintances; having reckoned no less than three actors, who, one after another, stopped to speak with her, and seemed to treat her with great familiarity. This was not at all agreeable to me, who feeling, for the first time, what it was to be jealous, returned to my seat so pensive and melancholy, that Laura observed it as soon as she came back. "What is the matter with thee, Gil Blas? (said she with surprise.) What gloomy demon has taken possession of thee since I went away? Thou seemest sad and dejected."—"I have too much reason to be so, my princess (answered I;) you have a little too much vivacity in your behaviour: I have observed you with the actors."—"A pleasant cause of melancholy, indeed! (said she, laughing.) How! does that give thee any uneasiness? Truly thou art a mere novice: but thou wilt see a great many other strange things among us, and must accustom thyself to our easy way of life.—Harbour no jealousy, child; for that, among comedians, is looked upon as ridiculous; therefore we have none of it. Fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, and cousins, with us, are the most complaisant persons on earth, and generally make settlements for their own family."

After having exhorted me to take umbrage at nothing, but look upon every thing with composure, she declared that I was the happy mortal who had found the way to her heart; and assured me, that her love should always rest on me alone. On this assurance, which however I might have distrusted, without the imputation of being too suspicious, I promised never more to be alarmed, and kept my word; for that very evening I saw her in close conversation, and heard her laugh heartily with

several different men. When the play was over, we went home with our mistress, where Florimonda soon after arrived, with three old noblemen and an actor, to supper. Besides Laura and me, there were of servants in the house, a cookmaid, a coachman, and a page, who all joined in preparing for supper. The cook, who was no less dexterous than Dame Jacinta, was assisted by the coachman in dressing the victuals, while the chambermaid and page laid the cloth, and I furnished the beaufet with the finest plate and several cups of gold, which were offered to the goddess of the temple. I stored it likewise with bottles of the choicest wines, serving in my own person as cup-bearer, to show my mistress that I could turn my hand to every thing. The deportment of the actresses, during the repast, filled me with admiration: they assumed airs of importance, and imagined themselves women of the first rank. Far from addressing the noblemen with the title of your excellence, they did not even give them that of your lordship; but called them simply by their names: true, indeed, these very noblemen had spoiled and made them so vain by suffering them to be so familiar.—As for the actor, he, like a player used to perform the hero, treated them without ceremony, drank to their health, and maintained (as one may say) the upper end of the table. "Upon my soul (said I to myself) when Laura demonstrated the quality of the marquis and player in the day-time, she might have added that they are still more so in the night, since they spend it thus in drinking together."

Arsenia and Florimonda being naturally wanton, a thousand hardy expressions escaped them, mingled with small favours and toyings which were exquisitely relished by these old sinners. While my mistress amused the one with a little innocent ribaldry, her friend, sitting between the other two, did not act the Susanna with them. While I was

considering this picture, which had but too many charms for a young fellow like me, the dessert was brought in: upon which I set wine and glasses on the table, and went to supper with Laura, who waited for me. "Well, Gil Blas (said she) what is thy opinion of those noblemen thou hast seen?"—"They are doubtless (answered I) adorers of Arsenia and Florimonda."—"No (said she) they are old lechers, who visit coquets without attaching themselves to them, and ask only small compliances, paying generously for the trifling favours they receive. Thank heaven! Florimonda and my mistress are at present without lovers; I mean such lovers as assume the husband, and want to engross all the pleasure of the house, because they support the expence of it. As for my own part, I am very glad it is so; and maintain that a coquet of sense ought to fly these sort of engagements. Why should she give up her liberty to a master? 'Tis better to acquire an equipage penny by penny, than have one at such a price."

When Laura was in a speaking humour (which was almost always the case) words cost her nothing. —Heaven! what a volubility of tongue was she mistress of! She told me a thousand adventures which had happened to the actresses of the prince's company; and I concluded from her discourse, that I could not be in a better situation to become perfectly acquainted with vice. I was unhappily of an age when this does not create much horror; and besides, the chambermaid painted these irregularities so artfully, that I beheld only the delicious side of them. She had not time to relate the tenth part of the exploits of the actresses; for she had spoke but three hours, when the noblemen and player withdrew with Florimonda, whom they conducted to her own house.

After they were gone, my mistress giving me money, said, "There, Gil Blas, are ten pistoles to go to market to-morrow morning: five or six of our

gentlemen and ladies are to dine with me, so that you must take care and have every thing in plenty."—"Madam (answered I) with this sum I'll engage to entertain the whole troop."—"Friend, (replied Arsenia) be so good as to correct your expressions: you must not call them the troop, but the company. We say a troop of thieves, a troop of beggars, and a troop of authors; but learn to say a company of comedians. The corps of actors in Madrid, especially, deserve to be called a company." I asked pardon for having used such a disrespectful term, and most humbly begged she would excuse my ignorance; protesting that, for the future, whensoever I should mention the gentlemen actors of Madrid in a collective manner, I would always call them the company.

CHAPTER XI.

I WENT to market next morning, in order to begin my office of butler; and as it was a meagre-day, bought, by order of my mistress, some good fat pullets, rabbits, partridges, and other wild fowl; for as the gentlemen-players were not altogether satisfied with the behaviour of the church towards them, they did not think proper to adhere scrupulously to its commandments.—I brought home more victuals than would have sufficed twelve honest gentlemen, during three days in carnival-time; so that the cook had work enough for the whole morning. While she prepared the dinner, Arsenia got up, and remained at her toilet till noon, when Signors Rosimiro and Ricardo (two actors) arrived; Constantia and Celinaura (two actresses) came soon after: and at last Florimonda

on these sort of adventurers, especially when persons of certain rank are concerned."

"Gentlemen (said Florimonda, interrupting him, truce with your intrigues, if you please; they are very well known to all the world, and let us talk of Imenia. They say that nobleman, who has spent so much money upon her, has left her at last."—"Yes, truly (cried Constantia) and I'll tell you more; she has lost a little citizen, whom she certainly would have ruined. I know the foundation of the whole affair: her Mercury committed a terrible blunder, by carrying to the nobleman a letter she had wrote to the citizen, and giving this last the billet intended for the lord."—"These are great losses, my dear," (replied Florimonda.)—"Oh! as for the nobleman (said Constantia) there is no great matter; he has spent almost his whole estate: but the citizen had just began his career, and had never passed through good hands, which is a thousand pities."

In this manner they discoursed before dinner, and their conversation turned on the same subjects while they were at table. But as I should never have done, if I undertook to repeat all the expressions full of malice and folly which I heard, I hope the reader will excuse me for suppressing them, in order to describe the reception of a poor devil of an author, who came in towards the end of the repast.

Our page came, and said aloud to his mistress, "Madam, a man in marvellous foul linen, bedaggled all over, and who, so please you, looks very much like a poet, wants to speak with you."—"Show him up (answered Arsenia:) don't stir, gentlemen, 'tis but an author." Sure enough it was one, whose tragedy had been received, and who brought a part for my mistress. He was called Pedro de Moya, and, as he entered, made five or six profound bows to the company, who neither got

up, nor returned his compliment. Arsenia only answered his profusion of civility by a slight inclination of her head. He advanced into the room, trembling and confused, and let his gloves and cloak fall, which having taken up, he approached my mistress, and presented to her a paper with more respect than that of a counsellor, when he delivers a petition to a judge; saying, "Be so good, Madam, as to accept of this part, which I take the liberty to offer." She received it in a cold and disdainful manner, without ever deigning to answer his compliment.

This, however, did not discourage our author, who, making use of this opportunity to distribute the different parts of his play, gave one to Rosimiro, and another to Florimonda, who did not treat him a whit more courteously than Arsenia had done. On the contrary, the player, naturally very obliging, as these gentlemen commonly are, insulted him with the most cutting raillery, which Pedro de Moya felt, but durst not retort, lest his piece should suffer for his imprudence. He retired, therefore, without speaking, but sensibly touched, as I perceived, with his reception; and I believe that, in the bitterness of his resentment, he did not fail to curse within himself the players, as they deserved; and they, when he was gone, began to speak of authors with great disrespect. "Signor Pedro de Moya (said Florimonda) did not seem to go away well satisfied."

"Pshaw, Madam (cried Rosimiro) don't disturb yourself about that: authors are not worth notice; if we should treat them on an equal footing, it would spoil them. I know these sorry gentlemen; they would soon forget themselves. Let us, therefore, use them like slaves, and we need not fear that we shall tire their patience: for though their displeasure may detach them from us sometimes, the fury of writing will bring them back, and they will think themselves very happy, provided we

deign to act their performances."—"You are in the right (said Arsenia) we only lose those authors whose fortunes we have made; for as soon as we have procured a good settlement for them, idleness takes possession of them, and they work no more. Luckily the company don't break their hearts, and the public is no loser by their sloth."

These fine observations were much applauded, and it was determined, that authors, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they receive, owed their all to the players, who, therefore, claimed the superiority over them, and certes they could not despise them more.

CHAPTER XII.

The company remained at table until the hour arrived of going to the theatre, whither they repaired in a body. I followed, and once more saw the play, which gave me such pleasure, that I resolved to take the same opportunity every day. In this I did not fail, and insensibly became reconciled to the actors; such is the force of custom: I was particularly charmed with those who ranted and distorted themselves most upon the stage, and was not at all singular in this way of thinking.

The beauty of the performance touched me no less than the manner of representation: I was quite transported with some of them; and among the rest was prodigiously fond of those where all the cardinals, or the twelve peers of France, appeared. I remember that in two days I got by heart a whole comedy, entitled, The Queen of Flowers. The Rose, who was queen, had the Violet for her confi-

dante, and the Jessamine for her usher. I thought nothing could be more ingenious than these works, which I imagined did a great deal of honour to the taste of our nation.

I not only adorned my memory with the brightest passages from these dramatic master-pieces; I set about bringing my taste to perfection; which to accomplish, I listened with a greedy attention to all that the players said. If they praised any performance, I esteemed it; and whatsoever met with their disapprobation was immediately despised by me. I thought they were as skilful in plays as jewellers are in diamonds. Nevertheless, Pedro de Moya's tragedy had great success, although they had prognosticated its damnation. But even this could not make me suspect their judgment; and I chose rather to believe that the public wanted common sense, than to doubt of the company's infallibility. I was assured, however, from all quarters, that those new pieces of which the players had no good opinion were usually very much applauded; and that, on the contrary, those which they received with approbation were commonly hissed by the audience. I was told that it was a maxim with them to judge erroneously of the works that were presented to them; and was informed of a thousand instances where the success belied their determination; but all these proofs were scarce sufficient to disabuse my understanding.

I shall never forget what happened one day in the first representation of a new comedy, which the players had pronounced cold and tedious, and actually thought unpassable. In these sentiments they performed the first act, that met with great applause, which quite astonished them. The second act was played, and still better received than the first: upon which the actors were confounded. "How the devil! (said Rosimiro) is it possible that this comedy should take!" At last they acted the

third, which gave more pleasure than the two former. "I can't comprehend the meaning of this (said Ricardo;) we imagined that this piece would not please, yet every body is charmed with it."—"Gentlemen (said one of them very plainly) the reason is, because there are a thousand strokes of wit in the performance which we have not observed."

I no longer, therefore, looked upon the players as excellent judges, but became a just appraiser of their merit: and, indeed, they justified to a tittle all the ridicule they met with from the world: for some of the actors and actresses were giddy with applause; and considering themselves as objects of admiration, thought they bestowed a favour on the public when they deigned to play. I was shocked at their faults, but unhappily too well pleased with their way of life; so that I plunged into debauchery. How could it be otherwise? Their conversation was pernicious to youth, and all I saw contributed to corrupt my morals: had I been ignorant of what passed at the houses of Casilda, Constantia, and the other players, that of Arsenia's alone was but too capable of undoing me: for, besides the old noblemen I mentioned, there came thither beaus, young heirs whom usurers enabled to spend money, and sometimes, also, farmers of the revenue were admitted, who, far from being gratified for their presence, as they are in their own assemblies, were obliged to pay through the nose for their reception.

Florimonda, who lived hard by, dined and supped every day with my mistress; and people were surprised at the friendship that seemed to unite them. It afforded matter of astonishment to see coquets live together in such good intelligence; and every body imagined that, soon or late, they would quarrel about some gallant. But the world was very much mistaken in these perfect friends, who were joined by the most solid affection. In-

stead of being jealous of one another, like other women, they lived in common; and chose rather to share the spoils than foolishly dispute about the inclinations of the men.

Laura, by the example of these illustrious associates, made the best of her youth too: and it was not without reason she had told me that I should see strange things: however, I affected to be quite easy; because I had promised to adopt the unconcern of a player on such occasions; and thus I dissembled for some days, contenting myself with asking the names of the men with whom I found her particularly engaged. She always answered that it was an uncle or cousin. Heavens! what a crowd of relations she had. Sure her family was more numerous than that of King Priam: and the jade did not even confine herself to her uncles and cousins; but also went abroad frequently in order to allure strangers, by acting the widow of quality at the house of the old woman whom I mentioned before. In short, Laura (to give the reader a just and precise idea of her) was as young, as handsome, and as much a coquet as her mistress, who had no other advantage over her than that of diverting the town in public. I was borne down by the torrent for three weeks, during which I gave myself up to all manner of debauchery: but, at the same time, I must observe, in the midst of my pleasures, I was frequently seized with sentiments of remorse that proceeded from my education, and embittered all my enjoyments. Vice could not get the better of these warnings, which augmented in proportion as I became more debauched, and, by the effect of a happy disposition, I began to abhor the disorders of a theatrical life. "Ah, wretch! (said I to myself) is it thus thou fulfillest the expectation of thy family? Was it not enough to cheat it by choosing another employment than that of a tutor? Does thy servile condition hinder thee from living like an honest man? or does it become thee to live



their pride even to
resolved, and will r
deadly sins."

END OF

GIL BLAS

OF

SANTILLANE.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

GIL BLAS OF SANTILLANE.

BOOK IV.

A REMNANT of honour and religion, which did not fail to preserve amidst such corruption of morals, made me resolve not only to leave Arsenia, but also to break off all correspondence with Laura, whom, however, I could not help loving, though I was sensible of her flagrant infidelity. Happy is he who can thus profit by those moments of reflection that interrupt the pleasures which engross his attention! Early one morning I bundled up my clothes, and without clearing with Arsenia, who was, indeed, little or nothing in my debt, or taking leave of my dear Laura, I quitted the house where I had breathed nothing but the air of debauchery; and I had no sooner performed such a good action than heaven rewarded me for it, by throwing me in the way of the steward of Don Matthias my late master. Having saluted him, he knew me, and

stopped to enquire if I was in any service: to which I answered, that I had been about a minute or two out of place: for that, after having lived about a month with Arsenia, whose behaviour I did not like, I had left her of my own accord, in order to preserve my innocence. The steward, as if he had been scrupulously religious, approved of my delicacy, and told me that, since I was a young man of such honour, he would make it his business to settle me in an advantageous place. He performed his promise, and that very day introduced me into the service of Don Vincent de Guzman, whose manager was one of his acquaintance.

I could not have got into a better family, and therefore had no cause to be displeased with my situation in the sequel. Don Vincent was a very rich old nobleman, who had lived many years without law-suit or wife; the physicians having deprived him of his spouse, by endeavouring to free her of a cough, which she might have preserved much longer had she abstained from their prescriptions. Instead of marrying again, he had applied himself wholly to the education of Aurora, his only daughter, who was then going in her six-and-twentieth year, and justly passed for an accomplished young lady, for, with an uncommon share of beauty, she had an excellent genius perfectly well cultivated. Her father, though he was no conjurer, possessed the happy talent of managing his affairs to the best advantage; but had one fault, which, however, is pardonable in old men. He delighted in talking, and, above all things, of war and bloodshed. If any body was so unfortunate as to touch that string in his presence, he instantly set the trumpet to his mouth; and the hearers were very happy if they got off for the relation of two sieges and three battles. As he had spent two-thirds of his life in the army, his memory was an inexhaustible source of different actions, which were not always listened to with the same applause which he felt in recount-

ing them. Besides, he stammered in his speech, and was very prolix, which rendered his manner of relating very disagreeable. Otherwise I never knew a nobleman of a better character. He had a great deal of equanimity, and was neither passionate nor whimsical: a circumstance which I admired very much in a man of quality. Though he was a good economist, he kept an honourable house, his domestics consisting of several footmen and three women who waited on Aurora. I soon perceived that the steward of Don Matthias had procured a good post for me, and bent all my endeavours to maintain myself in it: for this purpose I began by reconnoitring the ground, that is, studying the different humours of every body in the family; then, regulating my conduct by the observations I made, it was not long before I acquired the good will of my master, and all his servants.

When I had been about a month in Don Vincent's family, I thought I perceived that his daughter distinguished me from all the rest of the valets in the house. Always, when her eyes were fixed upon me, I remarked a sort of complaisance in her countenance, which I could not observe when she looked at my fellows. Had I not lived among beaus and players it would never have come into my head to imagine that Aurora could think of me; but I was a good deal spoiled among these gentlemen, who are seldom extremely delicate in their sentiments of the most virtuous ladies. "If (said I to myself) we may believe those stage-players, they are sometimes benefited by the whims to which women of quality are subject. And how do I know that my mistress is free from such caprice? No! (added I) I cannot believe it. She is not one of those Messalinas who, belying the pride of their birth, humble their affections so unworthily, even to the dust, and dishonour themselves without blushing. But rather one of those virtuous, though tender young ladies, who, satisfied with the bounds

prescribed by honour to their inclinations, make no scruple of inspiring as well as of entertaining a delicate passion, which yields amusement without danger."

These were my sentiments of my mistress, though I did not know precisely how to interpret her behaviour. In the mean time, as often as she saw me, she did not fail to smile and express joy in her countenance; so that, without passing for a fool, any man might have been ensnared by such fair appearances: I therefore could resist them no longer; but concluded, that Aurora was strongly captivated with my merit; and looked upon myself as one of those happy domestics whose servitude is sweetened by love. That I might appear in some measure less unworthy of the favour which my good fortune had procured for me, I began to take more care of my person than I had ever done before: I spent all the money I had in linen, essences, and pomatums: the first thing I did of a morning was to dress and perfume myself, that I might not appear in dishabille before my mistress; and with this attention to my exteriors, and other airs, I assumed, in order to please, I flattered myself that my happiness was not far off.

Among Aurora's women there was one called Ortiz, an old gentlewoman who had lived more than twenty years in the family, and nursed Don Vincent's daughter, whom she still served in quality of a duenna, though she no longer performed the disagreeable part of that function; but, on the contrary, instead of discovering, as formerly, the actions of Aurora, her sole business now was to conceal them. One evening Dame Ortiz, having found an opportunity of speaking to me without being overheard, told me softly, that if I was wise and discreet, I would be in the garden at midnight, where I should be informed of things which I should not be sorry to hear. I answered, squeezing the duenna's hand, that I would not fail to be

there; and we parted immediately for fear of being surprised. Heavens! how did the time hang on my hands from that instant to supper (which in our family was always over in good time,) and from thence to my master's going to bed! Every thing seemed to drag on with extraordinary slowness, and, to crown my chagrin, when Don Vincent retired to his bed-chamber, instead of going to rest, he began to fight over again all his campaigns in Portugal, with which he had so often stunned me before. But one thing which he had never done hitherto, and reserved for this evening, was to tell me the names of all the officers who had distinguished themselves in his time, and even to recount their exploits. What did I suffer in hearing him to an end! He left off speaking, however, at last, and got into bed. Upon which I went into the little closet where I slept, from whence there was a passage, by a pair of back stairs, into the garden, and anointed my whole body with essence: I then put on a clean shirt strongly perfumed, and having neglected nothing which I thought might flatter the passion of my mistress, went directly to the place of assignation.

Not finding Ortiz there, I concluded, that, tired with waiting for me, she had returned to her apartment, and that the happy minute was past. I blamed Don Vincent for it, and as I was cursing his campaigns, heard it strike ten. This made me believe that the clock went wrong, for I was persuaded that it was at least an hour past midnight; but I was so happily mistaken, that, a good quarter of an hour after this, I heard another clock strike ten again. "Very well (said I to myself) I have but two whole hours to dance attendance, and they shall have no cause to complain of my punctuality. What must we do till twelve? Let us take a turn in the garden, and consider the part I am to play, which is a pretty new one to me, who am but a novice in the whims of women of quality. I know

well enough how to behave with abigails and actresses; these you accost with a familiar air, and come to the point without ceremony; but we must go another way to work with ladies of fashion: the gallant, I imagine, must be polite, complaisant, tender, and respectful, though not timorous: instead of endeavouring to hasten his own happiness by the violence of his transports, he ought to lie in wait for the moment of frailty."

These were my reflections, and this the conduct I proposed to observe with Aurora; representing to myself that, in a little time, I should have the pleasure of seeing myself at her feet, and of saying a thousand passionate things to that amiable object. I even recollected all the passages of our theatrical pieces, which might be of service to me and do me honour during our interview; and by a seasonable application of these I hoped (after the example of some players whom I knew) to pass for a wit, though I could only boast of a memory. Absorbed in these reflections, which amused my impatience more agreeably than the military stories of my master, I heard the clock strike eleven; upon which I plunged again into my reverie, sometimes walking, and sometimes sitting in an arbour at the farther end of the garden. The long-expected hour of twelve at last struck, and in a few minutes Ortiz, as punctual, though less impatient than I, appeared. "Signor Gil Blas (said she, accosting me) how long have you been here?" I replied two hours. "In good sooth (said she, laughing) you are very exact; it is a pleasure to make an assignation with you. True, indeed (continued she, with a serious air) you cannot pay too dear for the happy tidings I have to tell you. My mistress wants to have some private conversation with you. I will say no more. The rest is a secret you must learn from her own mouth. Follow me, and I will conduct you into her apartment." So saying, the duenna took me by the hand, and led me, in a

mysterious manner, through a little door, of which she had the key, into the chamber of her mistress.

CHAPTER II.

I SALUTED Aurora, whom I found in dishabille, in the most respectful manner, and with the best grace I could put on; and she received me with a smiling air, forced me to sit down by her, and bade her ambassadress retire into another room. After this prelude, with which I was not ill pleased, she addressed herself to me in these words: "Gil Blas, you must have perceived that I look upon you in a favourable light, and distinguish you from the rest of my father's servants; and even, though you may not have observed by my looks that I have a regard for you, the step I have taken this night will leave you no room to doubt it."

I gave her no time to proceed, but believing that I ought, as a polite gentleman, to spare her modesty the pain of a more formal explanation, I started up in a transport, and throwing myself at her feet, like a stage hero, who falls on his knees before his princess, cried in a theatrical tone, "Ah, madam! can it be possible that Gil Blas, hitherto the foot-ball of fortune, and outcast of nature, is so happy as to have inspired you with sentiments—" "Don't speak so loud (said my mistress, laughing) you will awaken my women, who are asleep in the next room. Get up, take your seat again, and hear me to an end, without interrupting me. Yes, Gil Blas (continued she, resuming her gravity) I am your well-wisher; and as a proof of my esteem, will impart to you a secret, on which the repose of my life depends: I am in love with a young gentleman of beauty, fortune, and illustrious birth:

his name is Don Lewis Pacheco; and although I have seen him several times in the Prado, and at public shows, I have never spoke to him, am even ignorant of his character, and don't know but he may be a person of bad morals. This is what I want to be informed of; and having occasion for a man to enquire carefully about his reputation, and bring me a faithful account of it, I make choice of you, and believe I run no risk, by entrusting you with this commission, in which I hope you will acquit yourself with so much discretion and address, that I shall never repent of having made you my confidant."

Here my mistress left off speaking, in order to know what answer I would make; and I, though at first disconcerted at being so disagreeably undeceived, quickly recollected myself, and surmounting the shame, which is always the concomitant of unsuccessful rashness, expressed so much zeal for the lady's interests, and devoted myself with so much ardour to her service, that, though she might still continue to think that I had foolishly flattered myself with having made an impression on her heart, she saw very well that I knew how to make amends for my folly. I asked but two days to bring her an account of Don Lewis; after which Dame Ortiz, being called in by her mistress, conducted me back into the garden, and left me there, after having said, "Good night, Gil Blas; I know your punctuality so well, that I need not recommend it to you to be early at the next assignation."

I returned to my chamber, not without some vexation to find my expectations balked: nevertheless, I was wise enough to reflect, that it became me better to be the confidant than the lover of my mistress. I considered too, that this might turn out to my advantage, as the messengers of love are, usually, well paid for their trouble; and I went to bed, in a full resolution to perform what

Aurora desired. With this view, I went abroad next day, and found no difficulty in learning the place of abode of such a noted cavalier as Don Lewis. I enquired into his character in the neighbourhood; but those to whom I applied could not fully satisfy my curiosity. This made me repeat my enquiries the following day, when I was more successful. Meeting by accident, in the street, a young man of my acquaintance, we stopped to chat a little, and, that very instant a friend of his happening to pass, made up to us, and told his comrade, that he had been just turned away by Don Pacheco, the father of Don Lewis, on suspicion of having drank a cask of wine belonging to his master. I did not lose such a fair opportunity of being informed of every thing I wanted to know, and succeeded so well by the questions I asked, that I went home very well satisfied that I was able to keep my word with my mistress. I was to see her again the next night, at the same hour and in the same manner as at first; but I did not suffer so much disquiet that night, and far from bearing the conversation of my old master with impatience, I introduced the subjects of his campaigns, waited for twelve with the utmost tranquillity, and it was not until I had heard the hour repeated by several clocks that I went down into the garden, void of essence and perfumes, resolved for the future to retrench that extravagance.

I found the most trusty duenna at the rendezvous, and she upbraided me in a satirical manner for having abated in my diligence. I made no answer, but let her conduct me into the apartment of Aurora, who, as soon as I appeared, asked if I had got good intelligence of Don Lewis?—"Yes, Madam (said I) and you shall hear it in two words. In the first place I must tell you, that he will set out very soon, on his return to Salamanca, in order to finish his studies. He is a young cavalier of honour and probity, and, being a gentleman and

Castilian, his courage is not to be doubted; he has, besides, a great deal of wit, and his behaviour is very agreeable: but that which, perhaps, you will least like in him, is a disposition too much a-kin to that of most of our young noblemen, extremely rakish. You must know that, young as he is, he has already had two actresses in keeping.—"Is it possible! (cried Aurora) heavens! what morals! But are you certain, Gil Blas, that he leads such a licentious life?"—"Oh! I don't at all doubt it, Madam (I replied;) I was informed by a valet, who was turned out of his service this morning: and servants are commonly very sincere, when they talk of their master's faults: besides, he keeps company with Don Alexo Segiar, Don Antonio Centelles, and Don Fernand de Gamboa; and that alone is a sufficient demonstration of his libertinism."—"Enough, Gil Blas (said my mistress, sighing;) on the credit of your report, I will combat my unworthy passion, which, though it has already taken deep root in my heart, I don't despair to overcome. Go, (added she, giving me a little purse well replenished) there is something for your trouble: beware of disclosing my secret, and remember that I depend upon your silence."

I assured my mistress that she might make herself perfectly easy on that score, for I was the Harpocrates * of trusty valets. After this assurance, I withdrew, very impatient to know the contents of the purse, in which I found twenty pistoles. This made me believe that Aurora would have certainly given me more had I brought her agreeable tidings, since she paid me so handsomely for such a mortifying piece of news: and I repented that I had not imitated the lawyers, who sometimes put a gloss upon the truth, in the practice of their profession: I was sorry for having nipped

* Harpocrates, among the ancients, was worshipped as the God of Silence.

in the bud an intrigue, the consequence of which might have been very advantageous to me; however, I had the consolation to see myself indemnified for my unseasonable expence in essences and perfumes.

CHAPTER III.

Soon after this adventure, Signor Don Vincent happened to fall sick; and though he had not been in such an advanced age, the symptoms of his disease were so violent, that we had reason to fear a fatal issue. When he was first seized, two of the most famous physicians of Madrid were sent for. One of them was called Doctor Andros, and the other Doctor Oquetos, who having examined the patient with great attention, were of opinion, that the humours of his body were in a state of fermentation: but in nothing else could they agree.—"We must make haste (said Andros) and purge off the humours, though they be crude, while they continue in this violent agitation of flux and reflux, lest they settle upon some noble part."—Oquetos, on the contrary, maintained, that they ought to wait for the concoction of the humours, before they should employ a cathartic.—"But your method (resumed the first) is directly opposite to that of the prince of medicine: Hippocrates orders cathartics in the very first days of the most ardent fever, and says, in express terms, that we must be ready to purge when the humours are in the orgasm; that is to say, in a state of fermentation."—"Oh! there you are mistaken (replied Oquetos;) Hippocrates, by the word orgasm, does not understand the fermentation, but the concoction of the humours."

Upon this, the doctors grew passionate; one repeated the Greek text, and quoted all those authors who had explained it in his way; the other, relying on a Latin translation, pronounced it in a tone still more vociferous. Which of them was in the right? Don Vincent was not the man to decide that question; but, seeing himself obliged to choose, bestowed his confidence on him who had dispatched the greatest number of patients; I mean the eldest of the two. Andros, therefore, who was the younger, withdrew, not without darting some strokes of raillery at his senior, on his interpretation of the word orgasm. Oquetos, who remained triumphant, being a man of Doctor Sangrado's principle, began, by ordering his patient to be copiously blooded, deferring his cathartic until the humours should be concocted: but death, who without doubt was afraid the purgation so sagely delayed would deprive him of his prey, prevented the concoction, and carried my master off. Such was the end of Signor Don Vincent, who lost his life, because his physician did not understand Greek!

Aurora having celebrated her father's funeral, in a manner suitable to his birth, took possession of his estate, and, being now mistress of herself, dismissed some of the domestics, with rewards proportioned to their several services, and, in a little time, retired to a castle which she had on the banks of the Tagus, between Sacedon and Buendia. I was not only one of those whom she had retained, and carried into the country with her, but also had the good fortune to become a necessary person. Notwithstanding the faithful report I had made to her of Don Lewis, she was still in love with that cavalier; or rather, finding herself unable to conquer her passion, she had abandoned herself entirely to it; and being no longer under a necessity of taking precautions to speak with me in private, "Gil Blas (said she, sighing) I cannot forget Don Lewis; in spite of all my efforts to banish him

from my thoughts, he is still present in my imagination; not such as thou hast painted him, plunged in all sorts of debauchery; but such as I would have him to be, tender, amorous, and constant." So saying, she began to melt, and could not help shedding some tears; which affected me so much, that I could scarce refrain from weeping also; and I could not make my court to her more effectually, than by sympathizing with her sorrow.—"I see thou hast a very tender disposition, my friend (added she, after having dried her fair eyes) and I am so well satisfied with thy zeal, that thou mayest depend upon being well recompensed. Dear Gil Blas, I have more occasion now than ever for thy assistance. I will disclose to thee a design, which at present engrosses me, and which thou wilt, no doubt, pronounce very capricious. Know, that I intend to set out immediately for Salamanca, where I will disguise myself like a cavalier, and, under the name of Don Felix, get acquainted with Pacheco, whose confidence and friendship I will endeavour to acquire: I will often speak to him of Aurora de Guzman, and call myself her cousin; by which means, he will, perhaps, express a desire to see her; and then my expectation will be answered. We will have two different lodgings at Salamanca, in one of which I will pass for Don Felix, in the other for Aurora, and presenting myself to the eyes of Don Lewis, sometimes metamorphosed into a man, and sometimes in my own dress, I flatter myself that I shall, by degrees, accomplish my purpose. I grant (added she) that this is an extravagant scheme; but I am hurried away by my passion, and the innocence of my intention makes me insensible of the risk I must run."

I was very much of Aurora's opinion, with regard to the nature of her design: nevertheless, how imprudent soever I judged it, I took care not to act the pedagogue; but, on the contrary, began to gild

the pill, and undertook to prove that this mad project was no more than an agreeable frolic, that could have no bad consequence. My mistress was pleased with this construction; for lovers are charmed with flattery, even in their most extravagant fancies. We now, therefore, looked upon this rash enterprize in no other light than that of a comedy, the skilful representation of which it was our business to concert. Having chosen our actors from the servants of the family, the parts were distributed, without the least quarrel or disturbance; because we were not players by profession. It was resolved that Dame Ortiz should act the part of Aurora's aunt, under the name of Donna Ximena de Guzman, attended by a valet and waiting-woman; and that Aurora, dressed like a cavalier, should entertain me as valet de chambre, together with one of her own maids in the disguise of a page, to be always about her person. The characters being thus regulated, we returned to Madrid, where we understood Don Lewis still was, but that it would not be long before he would set out for Salamanca; upon which we ordered the necessary dresses to be made with all diligence; and when they were finished, my mistress caused them to be conveniently packed up, until we should find a proper time and place for putting them on. Then leaving the care of her house to the steward, she set out in a coach drawn by four mules, and took the road to the kingdom of Leon, with all those of her servants who had parts to act in her performance.

We had already crossed Old Castile, when the axle-tree of the coach gave way, between Avila and Villaflor, about three or four hundred paces from a castle, which we perceived at the foot of a mountain. As night approached, we were not a little embarrassed, when a peasant, passing by accident, rid us of our anxiety, by telling us that the castle which we saw belonged to Donna Elvira,

widow of Don Pedro de Pinares, a lady whose character he extolled so much, that my mistress sent me to the castle, to beg a lodging for one night. Elvira did not belie the countryman's report, but received me with great affability, and favoured Aurora's compliment with such an answer as she desired. We repaired immediately to the castle, whither our coach was dragged slowly by the mules, and at the gate met Don Pedro's widow, who came out to receive my mistress. I will pass over in silence the civil things which were said on both sides, on this occasion, and only observe, that Elvira was a lady pretty much advanced in years, but very polite, and understood how to perform the duties of hospitality as well as any woman in the world. She conducted Aurora into a sumptuous apartment, where, leaving her to repose a few moments, she came and employed her attention on the most minute things that concerned us. Afterwards, when supper was ready, she ordered the cloth to be laid in Aurora's chamber, where they sat down together at table. Don Pedro's widow was not one of those people who cloud the honour of their entertainments with a pensive and discontented air: she was of a gay disposition, and supported the conversation in an agreeable manner; expressing herself with great dignity and elegance. I admired her understanding, and the delicate turn of her thoughts, which seemed to charm Aurora as well as me. They conceived a friendship for one another, and promised to maintain a correspondence by letters. Our coach could not be refitted till the following day, and as we should run some risk by setting out late, it was determined that we should stay at the castle another night. We, in our turn, were served with a profusion of victuals, and our beds were no less comfortable than our meal.

Next day, my mistress found new charms in the conversation of Elvira, with whom she dined in a

large hall, adorned with several pictures, one of which was remarkable for the beauty and wonderful expression of the figures, though it represented a very tragical scene to the view. A dead cavalier appeared lying on his back, and drowned in his own blood, but seemed still to retain a menacing air even in death. Near him lay a young lady in another attitude, stretched also upon the ground; a sword was seen plunged in her bosom, and she breathed her last sighs, fixing her dying eyes upon a young man, who seemed mortally grieved at the loss of her. The painter had likewise drawn another figure, which did not escape my attention; this was an old man of a good mien, who, strongly affected with the objects that struck his view, discovered as much sensibility as the youth. One would have thought that each of them felt the same pangs at sight of these doleful images, but that each received the impression in a different manner. The old man seemed overwhelmed with the profound sorrow in which he was plunged: but there was fury mixed with the affliction of the youth. The painter had expressed the whole with such strength, that we could scarce withdraw our eyes from the performance. My mistress having asked what story the picture represented; "Madam (said Elvira) it is a faithful representation of the misfortunes of my family." This answer excited the curiosity of Aurora, who expressed such an eager inclination to know more, that Don Pedro's widow could not dispense with promising her the satisfaction she desired. This promise, which was made before Ortiz, her two companions, and me, detained us all four in the hall after dinner. My mistress would have sent us away, but Elvira, perceiving that we longed fervently to hear the explanation of the picture, had the goodness to bid us stay, saying that the story which she was going to relate was none of those that required secrecy: and immediately began in these words:

* CHAPTER IV.

Roger, king of Sicily, had a brother and a sister: the first, called Mainfroy, revolted against him, and lighted up a dangerous and bloody war in the kingdom; but had the misfortune to lose two battles, and fall into the hands of the king, who contented himself with punishing his rebellion, by depriving him of his liberty. This clemency served only to make Roger pass for a barbarian, in the opinion of one part of his subjects, who said he had only saved his brother's life, in order to exercise upon him a slow and inhuman revenge. But all the rest, with more foundation, imputed the harsh treatment that Mainfroy suffered in prison to his sister Matilda alone: for she had, in effect, always hated the prince, and did not cease persecuting him as long as he lived; but she died soon after him, and her death was looked upon as a just punishment of her unnatural disposition.

Mainfroy having left two sons, as yet in their infancy, Roger wished to get rid of them, fearing that when they should arrive at a more advanced age, the desire of revenging their father would induce them to revive a faction which was not so much quelled, but that it might occasion new troubles in the state. He imparted his design to the senator Leontio Siffredi, his minister, who, to divert him from putting it in execution, undertook the education of prince Henriquez, the eldest, and advised him to commit the youngest, who was called Don Pedro, to the care of the constable of Sicily. Roger, persuaded that his nephews would be brought up by these men in that submission and

* This novel is a true story, on which the late Mr. Thomson has founded his tragedy of Tancred and Sigismunda.

duty which they owed to him, left the princes to their conduct, and took upon himself the care of his niece Constantia, who was of the same age with Henriquez, and only daughter of the princess Matilda; he furnished her with women and masters, and spared nothing in her education.

Leontio Siffredi had a castle two short leagues from Palermo, at a place called Belmont: and there that minister employed himself in rendering Henriquez worthy of mounting one day the throne of Sicily. He soon observed in that prince such amiable qualities, that he applied himself to the cultivation of them as closely as if he had had no children of his own. He was blessed, however, with two daughters; the eldest of whom, called Blanch, younger by a year than the prince, was adorned with the most perfect beauty: the other, named Portia, whose birth occasioned her mother's death, was still in the cradle. Blanch, and prince Henriquez, as soon as they were capable of love, entertained a mutual passion; though they had not the liberty of conversing in private. The prince, however, did not fail to find opportunities sometimes; and knew so well how to profit by those precious moments, that he engaged the daughter of Siffredi to allow him to execute a project he had formed. Just about this time it happened that Leontio was obliged, by the king's orders, to make a journey into one of the most remote provinces of the island: and during his absence, Henriquez caused an opening to be made in the wall of his apartment, that was contiguous to the chamber of Blanch; supplying it with a sliding partition of wood, that opened and shut, without being perceived; because it was so closely joined to the ceiling, that the eye could not discover the artifice. A skilful architect, whom the prince had made his friend, performed the work with equal diligence and secrecy.

Through this passage the amorous Henriquez

introduced himself sometimes into the chamber of his mistress: but he did not abuse her favour: for though she was imprudent enough to allow him a private entrance into her apartment, she did not condescend so far, until he had assured her, that he would never ask any thing that innocence could not grant. One night he found her very uneasy, because she had heard that Roger was very ill, and had sent for Siffredi, as high chancellor of the kingdom, in order to intrust him with his last will. She represented to herself already her dear Henriquez on the throne, and being afraid of losing him in that high station, was under the utmost anxiety; and the tears stood in her eyes when he appeared. "Heavens! you weep, madam: what must I think of that sorrow with which I see you overwhelmed?" "Sir (replied Blanch) I cannot conceal my alarms: the king, your uncle, will soon cease to live, and you will succeed him. When I, therefore, foresee how far your new greatness will remove you from me, I own I cannot be unconcerned. A monarch seldom beholds things with a lover's eye, and that which was his utmost ambition while he was a subject, affects him but slightly when he is on the throne. Whether it be an unhappy presage, or reason only that inspires me, I feel my soul agitated with emotions that all my confidence in your goodness cannot assuage; and though I dare not doubt your generosity, I cannot help distrusting my own destiny."—"Adorable Blanch! (replied the prince) your fears are obliging, and justify my attachment to your charms; but the excess of your doubts injures my love, and (if I may be allowed to say so) the esteem which you owe me. No! think not that my destiny and yours can ever be separated. Believe, rather, that you will always be the object of my happiness and joy. Lay aside your fear, therefore, and let it not disturb such endearing moments."—"Ah, Sir! (answered the daughter of Leontio) as soon as

you are crowned, your subjects, perhaps, will demand for your queen a princess descended from a long race of kings, whose splendid nuptials may add new realms to yours; and, perhaps, alas! you will answer their expectation, even at the expence of your inclination." "Ah! why (replied Henriquez, with some warmth) why are you thus prone to torment yourself, by raising such an afflicting image of what will never happen? should heaven dispose of the king my uncle, and make me master of Sicily, I swear that I will espouse you in Palermo, in presence of all my court, and I invoke all that is sacred to confirm my oath."

Siffredi's daughter was cheered by the protestations of Henriquez, and the rest of their conversation turned on the king's distemper: on which occasion, Henriquez discovered the goodness of his heart, in lamenting his uncle's fate, with which he had no great reason to be affected; the force of blood making him regret a prince, by whose death he should acquire a crown. Blanch, as yet, did not know all the misfortunes that threatened her. The constable of Sicily had met her coming out of her father's apartment, one day, when he was at the castle of Belmont on some important affairs, was captivated with her beauty, and next day demanded her in marriage of Siffredi, who consented to the match; but Roger's distemper intervening, the nuptials were deferred, and Blanch knew nothing of the matter.

One morning, just as Henriquez had done dressing, he was surprised to see Leontio, followed by Blanch, come into his apartment. "Sir (said that minister to him) the news I bring is afflicting, but the consolation with which they are attended ought to moderate your grief. The king your uncle is dead, after having left you heir to his sceptre, and Sicily is subject to your sway. The grandees of the realm, who attend your orders at Palermo, have commissioned me to receive them

from your mouth, and I am come, Sir, with my daughter, the first of your new subjects, to offer our early and sincere homage." The prince, who knew very well that Roger had laboured two months under a disease that gradually consumed him, was not much surprised at this piece of news: nevertheless, struck with the sudden change of his condition, he felt a thousand confused emotions rise within his breast; and having mused some time, broke silence, by addressing himself to Leontio in these words: "Sage Siffredi, I shall always look upon you as my father, glory in regulating my conduct by your counsel, and you shall be as much a king in Sicily as I am." So saying, he advanced to a table, on which there was a standish, and taking a sheet of paper, wrote his name at the bottom of the page. "What are you about to do, Sir?" (said Siffredi to him.) "I am going to manifest my gratitude and esteem (answered Henriquez, presenting the sheet to Blanch, and saying) Receive, madam, this pledge of my faith, and of the empire over my inclinations, which I now yield to you." Blanch took it, blushing, and made this answer to the prince: "I receive with respect the favours of my king; but I depend upon a father: and I hope your majesty will not take it ill, that I deposit this paper in his hands, to be used as his prudence shall direct him."

She accordingly gave the subscription of Henriquez to her father, who then observed what, till that moment, had escaped his penetration. He discerned the prince's sentiments, and said to him, "Your majesty shall have no cause to reproach me, for I will not abuse the confidence."—"My dear Leontio (cried Henriquez, interrupting him) don't imagine you can abuse it. Whatever use you shall make of the paper, I will approve of your determination. But, go (added he) return to Palermo, order the preparations to be made for my coronation, and tell my subjects that I will follow

you immediately thither, in order to receive their oaths of allegiance, and assure them of my affection." The minister obeyed his new master's orders, and, with his daughter, set out for Palermo.

A few hours after their departure, the prince took the same road, more engrossed by his love than by the high rank to which he was raised. As soon as he arrived in the city, he was saluted with innumerable shouts of joy, and, amidst the acclamations of his people, entered the palace, where every thing was already prepared for the ceremony, and where he found the princess Constantia in deep mourning, and, to all appearance, very much affected with Roger's death. As they owed one another a mutual compliment of condolence on the event, they both acquitted themselves very handsomely; but it was more cold on the side of Henriquez than on that of Constantia; who, in spite of the enmity subsisting between their families, could not hate the prince. He placed himself on the throne, and the princess sat on his right hand, in an elbow chair not quite so high. The grandees of the kingdom took their places, each according to his rank: the ceremony began, and Leontio, as high chancellor of the state, and keeper of the late king's will, opened and read it with an audible voice. This deed contained in substance, that Roger, seeing himself without issue, named the eldest son of Mainfroy for his successor, on condition that he should espouse the princess Constantia, which if he refused to perform, he should forfeit the crown of Sicily to the infant Don Pedro, his brother, who should enjoy it on the same terms.

Henriquez was confounded at these words; the restriction gave him incredible pain, which became still more violent, when Leontio, after having read the will, pronounced to the whole assembly: "My lords, having reported the last intentions of the late king, to our new monarch, that generous prince consents to honour his cousin the princess Constan-

tia with his hand."—At these words, Henriquez interrupted the chancellor, saying, "Leontio, remember the writing which Blanch"—"Sir (said Siffredi with precipitation, before the prince had time to explain himself) here it is. The grandees of the realm (added he, showing the paper to the assembly) will here see by your majesty's august signature, the esteem you have for the princess, and the deference you pay to the last will of the deceased king, your uncle."—Having spoke these words, he read the deed with which he himself had filled the paper, containing the most solemn engagement to marry Constantia, conformable to the intention of Roger. The hall rung with repeated shouts of all present, who cried, "Long live our magnanimous king Henriquez!" For, as nobody was ignorant of the aversion which that prince had always manifested for the princess, it was feared, not without reason, that he would revolt against the condition of the will, and by these means raise commotions in the kingdom. But the reading of the paper entirely composed the minds of the nobles and people, and excited those general acclamations which in secret tortured the monarch's soul.

Constantia, who, both on account of her own glory, and her passion for Henriquez, enjoyed the public satisfaction more than any body, chose this time to assure him of her gratitude. But the prince, in vain endeavouring to constrain himself, received her compliment with great affliction, and was, indeed, in such disorder, that he could not even perform what decency required. At last, yielding to the violence of his passion, he approached Siffredi, whom the duty of his office obliged to be pretty near his person, and, with a low voice, said, "What have you done, Leontio? The subscription, which I put into your daughter's hands, was not intended for this use. You have betrayed"—"Sir (said Siffredi, interrupting him in a resolute

tone) consider your own glory! If you refuse to follow the will of the king your uncle, you lose the crown of Sicily." He had no sooner spoke in this manner, than he removed at a greater distance from the king, that he might not have an opportunity to reply. Henriquez remained in the utmost perplexity, and felt himself agitated by contrary emotions. He was incensed against Siffredi, he could not resolve to abandon Blanch; but, distracted between her and the interest of his glory, it was some time before he could come to any resolution. However, he was determined at last, and thought he had fallen upon a method to preserve the daughter of Siffredi, without renouncing the throne. He feigned submission to the will of Roger, and purposed, while a dispensation for his marriage with his cousin should be soliciting at Rome, to gain the nobles of the realm by his bounty, and establish his power so well, that he should not be obliged to fulfil its conditions.

As soon as he had formed this design, he became more tranquil, and turning to Constantia, confirmed to her what the high chancellor had read before the whole assembly. But in the very moment, when he betrayed himself so far as to plight his troth to her, Blanch arrived in the council-hall. She came thither by her father's command, to pay her respects to the princess, and her ears were struck with the words of Henriquez, at her first entrance. Besides, Leontio, being desirous that she should have no cause to doubt of her misfortune, said, while he presented her to Constantia, "Daughter, do homage to your queen, and wish her all the sweets of a flourishing reign and happy marriage." This terrible stroke overwhelmed the unfortunate Blanch: in vain she endeavoured to conceal her grief; she blushed and grew pale alternately, and shook through every limb. Nevertheless, the princess had not the least suspicion of the cause, but attributed the disorder in which she paid her com-

pliment to the perplexity of a young creature bred up in solitude, and altogether unaccustomed to the court. It was quite otherwise with the young king: the sight of Blanch abashed him; and the despair he observed in her eyes transported him quite beside himself. He did not doubt that, judging by appearances, she believed him unfaithful. He would have been less uneasy could he have spoke to her; but how could he find an opportunity, when all Sicily, as one may say, had its eyes upon him. Besides, the cruel Siffredi deprived him of that hope: for reading the thoughts of these two lovers in their looks, and willing to prevent the mischief which the violence of their passion might create in the state, that minister, in an artful manner, carried his daughter out of the assembly, and set out with her, on his return to Belmont; resolved, for more reasons than one, to have her married as soon as possible.

They were no sooner arrived, than he made her acquainted with all the horror of her fate, by declaring that he had promised her in marriage to the constable. "Just heaven! (cried she, in a transport of grief, which her father's presence could not suppress) for what direful punishment is the unfortunate Blanch reserved." Her despair was even so violent as to suspend all the faculties of her soul. She was seized with an universal chilness, and becoming clay-cold and wan, swooned away in the arms of her father. He was affected with her condition; but, though he shared her affliction with all the tenderness of a parent, his first resolution still remained unshaken. Blanch, at length, recovered her spirits, more through the exquisite sensation of her grief than through the water which Siffredi sprinkled on her face; which perceiving, while she opened her languishing eyes, "Sir (said she, with a feeble voice) I am ashamed that you have seen my weakness; but death, which must soon end my torments, will, in a little time, rid you of an un-

happy daughter, who has dared to dispose of her heart without your consent!"—"No, my dear Blanch (replied Leontio) live, and let virtue resume its empire in your breast. The constable's passion does you honour; it is the most considerable match in the kingdom."—"I esteem his person and his merit (said Blanch, interrupting him) but, Sir, the king had made me hope."—"Daughter (said Siffredi, cutting her short in his turn) I know all that you can say on that subject. I am not ignorant of your tenderness for the prince, which, at another conjuncture, I should not disapprove. You should even see me eager to ensure you of the hand of Henriquez, if the interest of his glory, and that of the state, did not oblige him to bestow it on Constantia. It is on that condition only that the late king designed him for his successor; and would you have him prefer you to the crown of Sicily? Believe me, I sympathize with you in the cruel stroke you suffer; but since we cannot withstand the decrees of destiny, make one generous effort. Your glory is concerned in concealing from the kingdom the vain hope with which you flattered yourself. Your sensibility for the king may raise reports to your disadvantage: and the only means of preventing them will be to marry the constable. In short, Blanch, this is no time to deliberate. The king yields you for a throne, and marries Constantia. The constable has my promise, which I beg you will perform; and if I must use my authority to bring you to this resolution, I order you to comply."

So saying, he left her to reflect upon what she had heard, hoping, that after having maturely considered the arguments he had used to support her virtue against her inclination, she would resolve, of herself, to give her hand to the constable. In this he was not mistaken. But what pangs did it cost the melancholy Blanch before she came to that determination! She was in a condition which, of

all others, was most worthy of compassion! Grief for seeing her presages of the infidelity of Henriquez changed into certainty, and for being constrained, in losing him, to give herself away to another, whom she could not love, created in her such violent transports of affliction, that every moment was attended with new torture. "If my misfortune is certain (cried she) how can I resist it without dying? Cruel destiny! why was I fed with the most delicious hope, when I was doomed to such an abyss of misery! and thou, perfidious lover! how durst thou betroth thyself to another after thou hadst promised eternal fidelity to me? hast thou so soon forgot the faith which thou hast sworn? As a punishment for having so cruelly deceived me, may heaven make the nuptial bed, which thou art going to stain with perjury, not a scene of pleasure, but remorse! may the caresses of Constantia convey poison to thy unfaithful heart! and may thy marriage be as baleful as mine! Yes, traitor, I will espouse the constable, whom I cannot love, to revenge me upon myself, and punish me for having so indiscreetly chosen the object of my love. Since my religion forbids me to make an attempt upon my life, the days I have to live shall be nothing else than an unhappy series of trouble and disquiet. If thou still preservest any tenderness for me, thou wilt be mortified at seeing me throw myself into the arms of another; and, if thou hast entirely fotgot me, Sicily, at least, may boast of having produced a woman who punished herself for having too simply disposed of her heart."

In such a situation did this unhappy victim of love and duty pass the night that preceded her marriage with the constable; and Siffredi finding her next day ready to comply with his desire, made haste to take the advantage of that favourable disposition. He sent for the constable to Belmont that same day, and married him privately to his daughter in the chapel of the castle. It was not

enough to renounce a crown, to lose for ever a person whom she loved, and bestow herself upon the object of her hatred, but she was also obliged to dissemble her sentiments before a husband who was inflamed with the most ardent passion for her, and naturally of a jealous disposition. That spouse, charmed with the possession of what he held most dear, was continually in her company, and did not even allow her the sad consolation of bewailing her misfortune in secret. When night approached, the daughter of Leontio felt her affliction redouble: but what were her pangs, when her women, after having undressed, left her alone with the constable! He asked, in a respectful manner, the cause of that sorrow with which she seemed to be depressed; and Blanch, perplexed by the question, feigned herself indisposed. This deceived her husband at first, but he did not long continue in his mistake: for, as he was really concerned at the condition in which he saw her, and pressed her to go to bed, his entreaties, which she misinterpreted, presented such a cruel image to her imagination, that, being unable to contain herself any longer, she gave free vent to her sighs and tears. What a sight was this for a man who believed himself at the very summit of his happiness! He no longer doubted that the affliction of his wife portended something sinister to his love. Nevertheless, though the knowledge of it threw him into a situation almost as deplorable as that of Blanch, he had such command of himself, that he concealed his suspicions. He redoubled his entreaties, and continued to press his spouse to go to rest, assuring her, that he would not interrupt the repose which she seemed so much to want. He even offered to call her women, if she thought that their assistance could alleviate her indisposition. Blanch, encouraged by this promise, told him, that her present weakness only required a little sleep. He pretended to believe her, and going to bed together, they passed a night very different

from those which Cupid and Hymen bestow on two lovers inspired by mutual passion.

While Siffredi's daughter indulged her sorrow, the constable endeavoured within himself to divine the cause that rendered his marriage so unhappy. He concluded, that there was a rival in the case; but was bewildered in his own imagination when he attempted to discover who that rival was; and the sole result of his conjectures was, that he was the most unhappy of all mankind. He had already spent two-thirds of the night in these agitations when his ears were struck with a hollow noise; and he was not a little surprised to hear somebody walking softly in the chamber. He believed himself mistaken; for he remembered that he himself had locked the door after Blanch's women had gone, and drew back the curtain to discover by the evidence of his eyes the cause of the noise which he heard: but the light which had been left in the chimney was extinguished, and, in a little time, he heard the name of Blanch repeated several times in a soft and languishing tone. Then his jealous suspicions were inflamed to fury, and his honour alarmed, obliging him to rise, in order to prevent an affront or take vengeance for it; he seized his sword, and moved towards that side whence the voice seemed to come. Feeling a naked sword opposed to his own, he advanced, the other retired, he pursued, and the other vanished from his pursuit. In vain did he search for him, who seemed to fly, through all the corners of the room, as much as the darkness would allow; he could not find him; he stopped, listened, and heard nothing. All seemed to be enchantment; he went to the door which he imagined had favoured the flight of the secret enemy of his honour, but he found it fast locked as before. Not being able to comprehend any thing of this adventure, he called those of his people who were nearest, and as he opened the door for that purpose stood in the passage, and kept himself on

his guard, that the person whom he sought might not escape.

Some servants, hearing his repeated cries, came running with lights: upon which he took a candle, and made a new search in the chamber, sword in hand; but found nobody, nor the least mark of any person's having been there. He did not even perceive the private door, nor the opening through which there was a passage. He could not, however, blindfold himself with regard to the circumstances of his misfortune, but remained in a strange confusion of thoughts. Should he have recourse to Blanch? she was too much concerned in the truth for him to expect an explanation from her. He therefore resolved to go and open his heart to Leontio, after having dismissed his servants, telling them that he thought he had heard a noise in his chamber, but was mistaken. He met his father-in-law coming out of his apartment at the disturbance he had heard, and recounted to him what had happened, with all the marks of extreme agitation and profound grief.

Siffredi was surprised at the adventure, which, though it did not seem natural, he nevertheless believed; and thinking that the king's love was capable of any thing, was very much afflicted with that consideration. But, far from flattering the jealous suspicions of his son-in-law, he represented to him, with an air of assurance, that the voice which he thought he heard, and the sword that was opposed to his, could be no other than phantoms of an imagination misled by jealousy; for it was impossible that any body could have got into his daughter's chamber; that, with regard to the melancholy which he had observed in his wife, it might be occasioned by some indisposition; that honour ought not to be answerable for the vicissitudes of temper; that the change of condition in a girl used to live in solitude, who sees herself on a sudden delivered to a man whom she had not had time

to know and to love, might be the cause of those tears, sighs, and that sharp affliction of which he complained; that love was not to be kindled in maidens of a noble birth by any other means than time and assiduity; for which reasons he exhorted him to calm his disquiet, redouble his tenderness and care, in order to dispose Blanch to become more sensible of his merit: and entreated him to return to his chamber, being persuaded that his uneasiness and distrust were injuries done to the virtue of his wife.

The constable made no answer to the remonstrances of his father-in-law; whether he really began to think that he might have been imposed upon by the disorder of his mind, or judged it a wiser course to dissemble than to undertake, in vain, to convince the old man of an event so void of all probability. He returned to his apartment, lay down by his wife, and tried to obtain, by sleep, some respite from his disquiet. Blanch, on her side, was not less uneasy than he: she had but too well heard that which alarmed her husband, and could not consider as an illusion an adventure, the secret and motives of which she knew.—Surprised that Henriquez should seek to introduce himself into her apartment, after having so solemnly pledged his faith to Constantia, instead of approving or feeling the least glimpse of joy at this step, she looked upon it as a new outrage, and her heart was incensed against him.

Whilst the daughter of Siffredi, prejudiced against the young king, believed him the most unfaithful of men, that unhappy prince, more in love than ever, wished for an interview with Blanch, in order to encourage her against the appearances that condemned him. He would have come sooner to Belmont for that purpose had he been permitted by the multiplicity of business in which he was necessarily engaged; but he could not steal away from court before that night. He was too well acquaint-

ed with all the private corners of a place where he had been educated to be under any difficulty of getting unseen into Siffredi's castle; and he still kept the key of a private door that belonged to the garden, through which he got into his old apartment, from whence he passed into the chamber of Blanch.—You may imagine the astonishment of that prince when he found a man there, and felt a sword opposed to his own. He had well nigh discovered himself, and punished on the spot the audacious wretch who durst lift his sacrilegious hand against his lawful king; but the respect he owed to Leontio's daughter suspended his resentment. He retired in the same manner as he had entered, and, more afflicted than ever, took the road to Palermo; where, arriving some moments before day, he shut himself up in his apartment. But the agitation of his spirits depriving him of rest, he resolved to return to Belmont; his safety, honour, and, above all, his love, not permitting him to remain longer ignorant of the least circumstance of such a cruel adventure.

It was no sooner day than he commanded his hunting equipage to be got ready, and, under pretence of taking that diversion, rode far into the forest of Belmont, attended by his sportsmen and some courtiers. He followed the chase some time, the better to conceal his design; and, when he saw every one eagerly engaged at the heels of the hounds, he separated himself from them, and, all alone, took his way to Leontio's castle. He was too well acquainted with the paths of the forest to lose himself, and his impatience not permitting him to spare his horse, he in a little time overrun the distance which separated him from the object of his love. He was just inventing some plausible pretext to procure for himself a private interview with the daughter of Siffredi, when, crossing a small road that led by one of the park-gates, he perceived hard by two women sitting in close conversation at the

root of a tree. As he did not doubt that these people belonged to the castle, the sight of them raised within him some emotion: but he was much more transported when, the women turning towards him at the noise of his horse's feet, he knew one of them to be his dear Blanch, who had escaped from the castle with Nisa, one of her women, who enjoyed the greatest share of her confidence, to bewail her misfortune at full liberty.

He flew—he threw himself headlong (if I may use the expression) at her feet; and perceiving in her eyes all the marks of the most profound affliction, was melted at the sight. "Fair Blanch (said he) suspend the emotions of your grief: appearances, I confess, represent me guilty to your eyes: but when you are made acquainted with the design which I have formed in your behalf, that which you now look upon as a crime will appear to you a proof of my innocence and excess of love." These words, which Henriquez thought capable of moderating, served only to redouble the affliction of Blanch, who would have answered him, had not her voice been choaked up with her sighs. The prince, astonished at her disorder, said, "How, madam, can't I then calm your disquiet? By what misfortune have I lost your confidence? I, who hazard my crown, and even my life to keep myself yours!" 'Twas then that the daughter of Siffredi, making an effort to explain herself, replied, "Sir, your promises are now unseasonable. Nothing, henceforth, can bind my destiny to yours."—"Ah, Blanch! (said Henriquez, interrupting her with warmth) what cruel words are these I hear! Who dares ravish you from my love? Who dares oppose the fury of a king, who would put all Sicily in flames rather than suffer you to be torn from his hopes?"—"All your power, Sir (answered Siffredi's daughter in a languishing manner) cannot remove the obstacles by which we are separated. I am the constable's wife."—"The constable's wife!" (cried

the prince, staggering backwards, and unable to go on.) He was confounded and overwhelmed by this unexpected blow: his strength forsook him, and he dropped down at the root of a tree that grew behind him. Pale, trembling, and depressed, he had nothing free but his eyes, which he fixed upon Blanch in such a manner as gave her to understand how deeply affected he was with the unhappy tidings she had declared. She, on the other hand, looked upon him with an air which convinced him that her emotions were little different from those he felt; and these two unfortunate lovers preserved, between them, a silence that had something terrible in it. At length the prince, recollecting himself a little, by an effort of his courage, resumed the discourse, and said to Blanch, with a sigh, "What have you done, madam? your credulity has ruined me, and undone yourself."

Blanch, piqued at the prince's seeming to upbraid her, when she thought she had much more cause to complain of him, replied, "What, Sir! do you add dissimulation to infidelity? Would you have me discredit my own eyes and ears, and believe you innocent in spite of the evidence of my senses? No, Sir, I own myself incapable of such an effort of reason."—"Nevertheless, Madam (answered the king) you are imposed upon by these very witnesses which seem so faithful; even they have assisted in betraying you; and that I am innocent and faithful, is no less true than that you are the constable's wife."—"How, Sir! (said she) did I not hear you confirm to Constantia the present of your hand and heart? Have you not assured the nobles of the kingdom that you would fulfil the conditions of the late king's will? and has not the princess received the homage of your new subjects in quality of queen and spouse of Henriques? Were mine eyes then bewitched? Say, say rather, unfaithful prince! that you did not think Blanch ought to balance in your heart the interest of a

throne, and, without stooping to feign a passion that you no longer feel, and perhaps never felt, confess that the crown of Sicily appeared to you more fixed with Constantia than with Leontio's daughter.—You are in the right, Sir: a shining throne was no more my due than the heart of a prince such as you are. I was too vain to pretend to either; but you ought not to have indulged me in my error.—You know the alarms I felt on account of losing you; a misfortune that then seemed to me almost inevitable. Why did you encourage me with hope? Would to heaven my fears had not been dissipated! I should have accused fortune, not you: and you would have, at least, preserved my heart, though at the expence of a hand which no other should ever have obtained. It is now no time to justify yourself: I am the constable's wife; and that I may spare myself the consequence of a conversation that makes my glory blush, give me leave, Sir, without failing in that respect that I owe to you, to quit the presence of a prince whom I am no longer at liberty to hear."

So saying, she left Henriquez with as much haste as her present weak condition would allow. "Stop, madam! (cried he) and do not drive to despair a prince who will rather overturn that throne, which you upbraid him with having preferred to you, than fulfil the expectation of his new subjects."—"That sacrifice (said Blanch) is at present vain. While I am married to the constable these generous transports will not avail: since I am then no longer at liberty, it is of small importance to me that you reduce Sicily to ashes, or to whom you give your hand. If I have been weak enough to let my heart be surprised, I shall at least have fortitude enough to stifle its emotions, and let the new king of Sicily see that the constable's wife is no longer the lover of prince Henriquez." When she pronounced these words, being close to the park gate, she entered it of a sudden with Nisa, and, locking it on the other

side, left the prince overwhelmed with sorrow. He could not recover the blow which Blanch had given him by the account of her marriage. "Unjust Blanch! (cried he) you have lost all remembrance of our mutual engagement! In spite of our reciprocal vows, we are for ever parted; and the idea which I had cherished of possessing your charms was no more than a vain illusion. Ah, cruel maid! how dearly did I buy your approbation of my flame!"

Then the image of his rival's happiness presented itself to his fancy with all the horrors of jealousy; which took such full possession of his soul for some moments, that he was on the point of sacrificing the constable, and even Siffredi himself, to his resentment. Reason, however, by degrees, allayed the violence of his transports: but the impossibility he perceived of banishing from Blanch the impressions she retained of his infidelity threw him again into despair. He flattered himself with the hopes of effacing them, provided he could converse with her at liberty; for which purpose, judging it necessary to remove the constable, he resolved to have him apprehended as a person suspected of designs against the state. He accordingly charged with this office the captain of his guards, who, repairing to Belmont, secured his person in the twilight, and brought him prisoner to the castle of Palermo.

This incident filled all Belmont with consternation. Siffredi set out immediately to offer himself to the king as security for his son-in-law, and to represent the troublesome consequence of such an arrest. The prince, who expected this step of his minister, and who was resolved, at all events, to obtain a free interview with Blanch before the constable should be released, had expressly ordered that no person whatever should speak with him till next day. But Leontio, notwithstanding this order, finding means to get access to the king's

chamber, presented himself before him, saying, "Sir, if a loyal and respectful subject may be allowed to complain of his master, I am come to complain of you to yourself. What crime has my son-in-law committed? Has your majesty duly reflected on the eternal reproach you have fixed upon my family; and on the consequences of an imprisonment, which may alienate from your service the hearts of those who fill the most important posts of the realm?"—"I have certain intelligence (replied the king) that the constable carries on a criminal correspondence with the Infant Don Pedro."—"Criminal correspondence! (cried Leontio, with surprise.) Do not believe it. Your majesty is imposed upon: treason never entered the family of Siffredi; and the constable's being my son-in-law is enough to screen him from all suspicion.—The constable is innocent; but other secret views have induced you to arrest him."

"Since you talk to me so freely (replied the king) I will speak to you in the same manner.—You complain of the constable's being imprisoned: what! have I not more cause to complain of your cruelty? 'Tis you, barbarous Siffredi! who have robbed me of my quiet, and reduced me, by your officious cares, to a condition that makes me envy the lowest of mankind. But don't flatter yourself that I will enter into your schemes—my marriage with Constantia is resolved upon in vain."—"How, Sir! (cried Leontio, trembling) can you refuse to marry the princess after having flattered her with that hope before your whole people?"—"If I deceive their expectation (replied the king) ascribe it solely to yourself. Why did you lay me under a necessity of promising that which I could not perform? Who compelled you to fill a paper which I gave your daughter with the name of Constantia? You was not ignorant of my intention.—You tyrannised over the heart of Blanch, in making her marry a man whom she did not love. But what

right had you to dispose of mine in favour of a princess whom I hate? Have you forgot that she is the daughter of that cruel Matilda, who, trampling under her feet all the ties of blood and humanity, made my father breathe his last under all the rigours of captivity? and shall I espouse her? No, Siffredi! lay aside that hope.—Before you see the torch of these direful nuptials lighted, you will see all Sicily in flames, and its ashes quenched in blood!"

"What do I hear! (cried Leontio.) Ah, Sir! what a prospect have you shown me! What terrible threats!—But I am unseasonably alarmed (added he in another tone;) you love your subjects too well to entail upon them such misery. You will not allow yourself to be overcome by love.—You will not tarnish your virtues with the weaknesses of ordinary men. If I have bestowed my daughter on the constable, it was done, Sir, with a view of acquiring for your majesty a valiant subject, who can support, with his arm and the troops which are at his disposal, your interest against that of the prince Don Pedro. I thought that in attaching him to my family by such intimate ties—"

"Ah! these are the ties (cried the prince Henriquez) these are the fatal ties that have undone me! Cruel friend! why did you inflict such a heavy stroke upon me? Did I order you to manage my concerns at the expence of my heart? Why did you not leave me to support my rights by myself? Did I want courage to reduce those who should rebel against me? I should have known how to punish the constable had he disobeyed me. I know that kings ought not to be tyrants, and that the happiness of their people should be their chief aim: but must they therefore be the slaves of their subjects, and, from the moment that heaven chooses them to govern, lose the right that nature grants to all men of disposing of their affections as they please? Ah! if they must not enjoy the privilege of the

lowest class of mortals, take back, Siffredi, that sovereign power which you would confirm at the expence of my repose."

"You know very well, Sir, (replied the minister) that your marriage with the princess was, by the late king, made the condition of your succession to the crown."—"And what right (answered Henriquez) had he to establish that condition? Had he received such an unworthy law when he succeeded to his brother King Charles? And how came you to be so weak as to submit to the unjust condition? For an high chancellor, methinks, you are very ill-informed of our customs. In a word, though I have promised my hand to Constantia, it was not a voluntary engagement; therefore I do not intend to keep my word: and if Don Pedro, from my refusal, conceives the hope of mounting my throne without engaging the people in a quarrel, which might cost too much blood, let the sword decide, in single combat, which of us is most worthy to reign." Leontio, not daring to urge him any farther, contented himself with asking, on his knees, the enlargement of his son-in-law, which he obtained. "Go, (said the king to him) return to Belmont, whither the constable will soon follow you." The minister went away, and got back to Belmont, persuaded that his son-in-law would not be long behind him. But in this he was mistaken: Henriquez resolved to see Blanch that night, and therefore deferred the release of her husband till next day.

Meanwhile the constable was tortured with the most cruel reflections: his imprisonment had opened his eyes with regard to the true cause of his misfortune: he, therefore, abandoned himself entirely to his jealousy; and renouncing the allegiance he had hitherto so commendably preserved, breathed nothing but vengeance. As he concluded that the king would not fail of being with Blanch that night, in order to surprise them together, he begged the governor of the castle of Palermo to let him go

out, assuring him that he would return to prison next morning before day. The governor, who was entirely devoted to him, consented to this the more easily, as he knew that Siffredi had already obtained his liberty, and even furnished him with a horse to carry him to Belmont; where the constable being arrived, he tied his horse to a tree, entered the park by a little door, of which he had the key, and was so lucky as to get into the castle unperceived. He went straight to the apartment of his wife, and concealing himself in an antichamber behind a screen, which he found there, proposed to observe from thence all that should pass, and to appear suddenly in Blanch's chamber, at the least noise he should hear.—While he was in this situation, he saw Nisa come out from her mistress, and retire to the closet where she lay.

Siffredi's daughter, who had easily discerned the motive of her husband's imprisonment, concluded that he would not return that night to Belmont, although her father had told her the king assured him the constable would set out soon after him. She did not doubt that Henriquez would take the advantage of that conjuncture to visit and converse with her at liberty; and in this opinion she waited for the prince, in order to reproach him with an action which might have terrible consequences, in regard to her.—Accordingly, in a little time after Nisa had withdrawn, the partition opened, and the king came and threw himself at Blanch's feet, saying, "Madam, do not condemn before you have given me the hearing: if I have ordered the constable to be imprisoned, consider that it was the only means I had left to justify myself; therefore impute that artifice to yourself alone. Why did you this morning refuse to hear me? Alas! tomorrow your husband will be enlarged, and I shall never have an opportunity of speaking to you again. Hear me, then, for this last time: if the loss of you makes me the most forlorn of mankind, at least

grant me the melancholy consolation of convincing you, that my infidelity is not the cause of my misfortune; for though I confirmed to Constantia the offer of my hand, it was what I could not dispense with doing, in the situation to which your father had reduced me.—There was a necessity for my deceiving the princess, for your interest as well as my own, in order to secure to you the crown as well as the person of your lover. This I flattered myself with accomplishing; and had already taken measures to break that fatal engagement; but you have destroyed my plan, and by giving yourself away too inconsiderately, laid up a fund of eternal sorrow for two hearts, which might have been rendered happy by the most inviolable love!"

He ended this complaint with such visible marks of real despair, that Blanch was touched with his condition, and no longer doubted his innocence, which at first gave her some joy; but afterwards, stung with the consideration of her misfortune, "Ah, Sir! (said she to the prince) after the cruel determination of our fate, you increase my affliction by letting me know that you were not guilty! What have I done! unfortunate that I am? My resentment has betrayed me! I thought myself abandoned, and in revenge accepted of the constable's hand, which was presented by my father! I am guilty of the crime, and have been the cause of our mutual mishap! Alas! while I accused you of having deceived me, it was I, too credulous lover! it was I who broke those bonds which I had sworn to keep for ever inviolate! Revenge yourself, Sir, in your turn—Hate the ungrateful Blanch—forget her."—"Ah, Madam! (said Henriquez, interrupting her with a melancholy air) how shall I find means to tear from my heart a passion, which even your injustice cannot extinguish."—"You must, however, Sir, make that effort;" (replied Siffredi's daughter, sighing.) "What! are you capable of that effort yourself?" (said the king.) "I cannot promise to

succeed; (answered she) but I will spare no pains in the endeavour."—"Ah, cruel Blanch! (said the prince) you will easily forget Henriquez, since you are able to form such a design!"—"And what can you expect? (replied she, in a more resolute tone.) Do you flatter yourself, that I will allow you to continue your addresses? No, Sir! abandon that hope. Though I was not born to be a queen, heaven never formed me to listen to dishonourable love. My husband, as well as you, Sir, is descended from the noble house of Anjou; and if my duty did not raise an insurmountable obstacle to your gallantry, my glory would hinder me from enduring it: I conjure you, therefore, to retire. We must see one another no more."—Heavens! what barbarity! (replied the king.) Ah Blanch, is it possible that you should treat me with such rigour? You do not think then, that your being in the arms of the constable is enough to overwhelm me! you must also forbid me your sight, the only consolation I had left!" "Fly me, rather (answered the daughter of Siffredi, shedding some tears) the sight of what one tenderly loves ceases to be pleasing, when the hope of possessing it is lost. Adieu, Sir! Fly from me. You owe that effort to your own glory and my reputation. I ask it, also, for my quiet: for, in short, although my virtue should not be alarmed by the emotions of my heart, the remembrance of your tenderness will entail upon me such cruel conflicts, that I shall scarce have strength enough to maintain them."

She pronounced these words so passionately, that she unwittingly overturned a candlestick which stood on a table behind her; and the candle going out in falling, she took it up in order to light it again, for which purpose she opened the door of the antichamber, and went to the closet of Nisa, who was not yet gone to bed. The king, who waited for her return, no sooner saw her approach with the light, than he made pressing instances to

her, that she would suffer his attachment. The constable, hearing the prince's voice, rushed into the chamber, sword in hand, almost at the same time that his wife entered, and advancing towards Henriquez with all the resentment that his rage inspired, "This is too much, tyrant! (cried he) don't think that I am so base as to endure the affront thou hast done my honour."—"Traitor (replied the king, putting himself in a posture of defence) don't imagine that thou art able to execute thy designs with impunity." With these words they began a combat which was too furious to last long: the constable, fearing that Siffredi and his servants, alarmed at the cries of Blanch, would soon come and oppose his vengeance, fought without caution. His rage divested him of all judgment; he took his measures so ill that he ran upon his adversary's sword, which entered his body to the hilt, and the moment he fell, the king checked his indignation.

Leontio's daughter, touched with the condition in which she saw her husband, and surmounting the natural reluctance she had for him, threw herself on the floor, and supported him with the most eager concern. But that unhappy spouse was too much prepossessed against her, to be affected with these expressions of her grief and compassion. Death, whose approaches he felt, could not suppress the transports of his jealousy; he saw nothing in his last moments but the happiness of his rival, and the idea appeared so horrid, that, collecting all the strength he had left, he lifted the sword which was still in his hand, and plunged it in the breast of Blanch. "Die (said he, while he stabbed her) die, unfaithful woman, since the ties of marriage have been too weak to preserve that faith which you swore to me at the altar! And thou, Henriquez (added he) boast not of thy fate. Thou canst not enjoy my misfortune, and therefore I die satisfied." Having spoke thus, he expired, and his

countenance, covered as it was with the shades of death, still retained something fierce and terrible. That of Blanch presented quite a different spectacle. The blow she received was mortal; she fell upon the body of her dying spouse, and the blood of this innocent victim was mixed with that of her murtherer, who had executed his cruel resolution so suddenly, that the king had not time to prevent ts effects.

The unfortunate prince, seeing Blanch fall, uttered a loud cry, and more confounded than she with the blow that robbed her of life, hastened to give her the same succour that she had offered to the constable. But she said, with a faltering voice, "Sir, you may spare yourself the trouble. I am the victim which unpitying fate demands; may it appease the wrath of heaven, and secure the happiness of your reign!" As she pronounced these words, Leontio, brought thither by her cries, entered the chamber, and struck with the objects that presented themselves to his eyes, became motionless where he stood; while Blanch, without perceiving him, continuing to speak to the king, said, "Adieu, prince; cherish my memory. My love and misfortunes claim that favour. Entertain no resentment against my father. Comfort his age and sorrow, and do justice to his zeal. Above all, make my innocence known. This is what I recommend to you more than any thing. Adieu, my dear Henriquez—I die—receive my last breath."

So saying, she expired; and the king having kept a melancholy silence for some time, said to Siffredi, who was overwhelmed with woe, "Behold, Leontio, contemplate your own work, and, in this tragical event, consider the fruit of your officious care and zeal for me!" The old man was so penetrated with sorrow that he made no reply—but why should I pretend to describe those things which no language can express? Let it suffice to say, that both uttered the most moving complaints, as soon as the

greatness of their affliction allowed them the use of speech. The king all his life preserved the most tender remembrance of his mistress, and could never be prevailed upon to marry Constantia, who being joined by the infant Don Pedro, they spared nothing to avail themselves of Roger's last will: but they were at last obliged to yield to prince Henriquez, who subdued all his enemies. As for Siffredi, the grief he felt for having been the cause of so many misfortunes detached him from the world, and rendered his native country insupportable to him: he, therefore, abandoned Sicily, and crossing over into Spain, with Portia, the only child he had left, purchased this castle, where he lived near fifteen years after Blanch's death, and had the comfort, before he died, of seeing Portia settled: she married Don Jerome de Silva, and I am the only fruit of that marriage. This (added the widow of Don Pedro de Pinares) is the history of my family, and a faithful account of the misfortunes represented in that picture, which my grandfather, Leontio, ordered to be drawn as a monument of the fatal adventure to his posterity.

CHAPTER V.

Ortiz, her companions, and I, having heard this relation, withdrew, and left Aurora and Elvira in the hall, where they spent the rest of the day in conversation. Far from being tired with one another, next day, when we set out, they were as much affected at parting as two friends who have long lived agreeably together.

At last we arrived (without meeting any bad accident) at Salamanca,* where we immediately

* Salamanca is one of the largest cities in Spain, situated

took a house ready furnished, and Dame Ortiz, as we had concerted it, assumed the name of Donna Ximena de Gusman. She had been too long a duenna not to be a good actress; accordingly, going out one morning with Aurora, a waiting maid, and valet, she repaired to a house where lodgings were let, and where we understood Pacheco usually lived. Having asked if they had an apartment to let, they answered in the affirmative, and showed her into one pretty handsomely furnished, which she hired immediately, giving earnest to the landlady, and telling her, that it was designed for one of her nephews who was coming from Toledo, to study at Salamanca, and would arrive that very day.

The duenna and my mistress having secured this lodging, went home again, and the fair Aurora, without losing time, transformed herself into a cavalier; covering her black hair with a light-coloured tour, painting her eye-brows of the same complexion, and adjusting herself in such a manner as that she might very well pass for a young nobleman. Her carriage was free and easy, and excepting her face, which was a little too handsome for a man, nothing could possibly betray her disguise: her maid, who was to serve in quality of page, took the dress also, and we were under no apprehension of her ill acting, for she had a good modest assurance in her air, which was very well adapted for the part she was to play. In the afternoon, these two actresses being in a condition to appear on the stage, (that is, in the lodging which had been taken,) I accompanied them thither in a coach, with all the baggage we should have occasion for.

The landlady, whose name was Bernarda Ramirez, received us with great civility, and conducted us to our apartment, where we began to enter

on the banks of the river Tormes, in the kingdom of Leon, and famous for its university.

into conversation, and agreed with her for our board by the month. Then asking if she had a good many boarders, she replied, "I have none at present. I might have abundance, if I would take all sorts of people; but I receive none but young noblemen; and I expect one this evening, who comes from Madrid to finish his studies. His name is Don Lewis de Pacheco; perhaps you may have heard of him."—"No (said Aurora) I know nothing of him, and you will oblige me by letting me know what sort of a man he is, since I am to lodge in the same house with him."—"Sir (answered the landlady, looking at the false cavalier) he is quite a fine figure, and pretty much of your own make. Ah! how happy you will be in one another! By St. Jago, I may boast of having at my house two of the most handsome noblemen in Spain."—"This Don Lewis (replied my mistress) has doubtless a thousand love-intrigues in Salamanca?"—"Yes, I'll assure you (said the old woman) he is a brisk gallant, upon my word. He has no more to do, but show himself and conquer; and among others, he has quite captivated a lady of youth and beauty, whose name is Isabella, an old lawyer's daughter, who is fond of him to distraction."—"And tell me, good mother, (cried Aurora, interrupting her with precipitation) is he as much in love with her?"—"He was, (replied Bernarda Ramirez) before his departure for Madrid: but I do not know if he retains his passion for her still; for in these points he is not much to be depended upon; but skips from woman to woman, as all young gentlemen usually do."

The good widow had scarce done speaking, when hearing a noise in the court-yard, we looked through the window, and perceived two men alighting from their horses: these were no other than Don Lewis de Pacheco himself, just arrived from Madrid, with his valet de chambre. Upon which the old woman left us, in order to receive

him, and my mistress prepared herself (not without emotion) to play the part of Don Felix. Don Lewis in a short time entered our apartment in his boots, and saluted Aurora, saying, "Understanding that a young nobleman of Toledo is a lodger here, I beg leave to express my joy in having him for a companion." While my mistress returned this compliment, Pacheco seemed surprised to see such an aimiable cavalier; and could not help telling her, that he had never before beheld any man so handsome and genteelly made. A great many civilities passed on both sides, after which Don Lewis retired to the apartment allotted for him.

While he was shifting and dressing, a sort of page, who wanted to deliver a letter to him, meeting Aurora on the stair-case by accident, mistook her for Don Lewis, and giving her the billet, said, "Signor cavalier, though I have never before seen Signor Pacheco, I believe I need not ask if you are he, being persuaded that I am not mistaken."—"No, friend, (replied my mistress, with admirable presence of mind) you are assuredly not mistaken, and you acquit yourself of your commission surprisingly well. I am Don Lewis De Pacheco; you may return; and I will take care to send an answer very soon." The page disappearing, Aurora shut herself up with her maid and me, and opening the letter, read these words.—

"With what joy did I receive the news of your arrival at Salamanca! My transport had well nigh got the better of my reason!—But is Isabella still dear to you? make haste, and assure her in person of your constancy: though she will scarce be able to support the pleasure of finding you unchanged!"

"This billet (said Aurora) proclaims the violence of the author's passion; and the lady is a rival not to be contemned. I must spare nothing to detach Don Lewis from her, and even to hinder him from

seeing her: the undertaking, I own, is difficult; but nevertheless, I don't despair of success." Accordingly my mistress having mused a minute or two, added, "I'll engage there shall be a breach between them in less than four-and-twenty hours." Pacheco having taken a little repose in his own apartment, returned to our's, and renewed his conversation with Aurora, before supper. "Signor cavalier (said he to her, with an air of pleasantry) I believe the husbands and lovers will have no cause to rejoice at your arrival at Salamanca; but rather have reason to be uneasy: as for my own part, I tremble for my conquests."—"Hark'e (answered my mistress, in the same tone) your fear is not ill grounded; Don Felix de Mendoza is a formidable man, I assure you. I have been in this country before, and know that the women here are not insensible: about a month ago, in my way through this city, I stopped here eight days, and I will tell you in confidence, that I inflamed an old lawyer's daughter."

I perceived Don Lewis disordered at these words. "May one, without being thought impertinent (said he) ask the lady's name?" "How! without being thought impertinent! (cried the pretended Don Felix) why should I make a mystery of it to you? Do you think me more reserved than other noblemen of my age? you must not do me such injustice. Besides, between you and me, the object does not deserve such delicacy. She's only a pitiful citizen; and a man of quality, you know, is never seriously engrossed by such abigails, but thinks he does them an honour in debauching them. I will, therefore, without ceremony, acquaint you with the name of the lawyer's daughter, which is, Isabella"—"And the lawyer (cried Pacheco, interrupting her with impatience) is not he called Signor Murcia de la Lianna?"—"The very same (replied my mistress) here is a letter which I received from her just now. You may read it, and see whether or

not the lady has a kindness for me." Don Lewis casting his eyes over the billet, knew the hand, and was struck dumb with confusion. "What is the matter? (added Aurora, with an air of astonishment) you change colour! I believe (God forgive me!) that you have some concern in this lady. Ah! how vexed am I for having spoke of her so freely!"

"I think myself obliged to you for your information (said Don Lewis, in a transport of anger and disdain.) Perfidious, fickle creature! Don Felix, I am bound to you for ever. You have extricated me out of an error, in which I might have remained a long time. I thought myself beloved. Beloved, did I say? I believed myself adored by that Isabella. I had, indeed, some regard for the creature; but now I see she is a coquette who deserves nothing but contempt."—"I applaud your resentment (said Aurora, feigning indignation in her turn) a lawyer's daughter ought to think herself very happy in having such an accomplished nobleman as you for her lover. Her inconstancy is inexcusable; and far from accepting the sacrifice she makes of you, I intend to punish her by slighting her favours."—"For my part (replied Pacheco) the only vengeance that I shall take, is never to see her again."—"You are in the right (cried the false Mendoza;) nevertheless, that she may know how much we both despise her, I think each of us should write to her an insulting letter, which I will enclose in one paper, and send as an answer to this her billet. But, before we proceed to this extremity, consult your heart. Perhaps you will, one day, repent of having broke with Isabella."—"No, no! (said Don Lewis) I shall never be so weak; and in the mean time consent to mortify the ungrateful creature, as you have proposed."

I was accordingly sent for paper, pen, and ink, and both of them set about composing very obliging letters for the daughter of Doctor Murcia la Lian-

na. Pacheco, in particular, could not find terms strong enough to express his sentiments, and tore five or six half-finished billets, because he thought they were not sufficiently severe. One, however, he was satisfied with at last; and no doubt he had reason so to be; for it contained these words: "Learn to know yourself, my princess, and be no longer so vain as to believe that I love you.—If I am captivated, it must be with other kind of merit than yours, which is scarce sufficient to amuse me for a few moments; and only calculated for diverting the meanest scholars of the university."—This courteous letter being written, and Aurora having finished hers, which was not a whit milder; she sealed them both, and enclosing them together, gave me the packet, saying, "There, Gil Blas, be sure to deliver this to Isabella this evening.—You understand me?" (added she, tipping me the wink, the meaning of which I could easily comprehend.) "Yes, Sir (answered I) the thing shall be done to your wish."

At the same time I went out, and being in the street, said to myself, "Oho! Gil Blas, then it seems you play the valet in this farce. Well, friend, show that you have wit enough to perform such a fine part. Signor Don Felix (as you see) depends so much on your understanding, that he contents himself with giving you a sign only. Is he to blame for that? No. I conceive his meaning: he desires that I should deliver this billet of Don Lewis only. That is the interpretation of the sign, than which nothing could be more intelligible." I did not hesitate in opening the packet, from which I took Pacheco's letter, and carried it to the house of Doctor Murcia, having soon informed myself whereabouts he lived. Finding the little page who had been at our lodgings at the door; "Brother (said I) don't you serve the daughter of Mr. Doctor Murcia?" When he answered in the affirmative, "You have such an obliging physiogno-

my (I replied) that I take the liberty to desire you will deliver a love-letter to your mistress."

The page asked from whom I brought it; and I no sooner told him that it came from Don Lewis de Pacheco, than he said, "Since it is so, follow me; I have orders to bring you in. Isabella wants to talk with you." I allowed myself, therefore, to be introduced into a closet, where I did not stay long before the lady appeared; and I was struck with the beauty of her face, having never beheld more delicate features. Her air was affected and childish; but, for all that, she had walked without leading strings for thirty good years at least. "Friend (said she to me, with a smiling air) do you belong to Don Lewis de Pacheco?" I answered that I had been his valet de chambre these three weeks; and then delivered the fatal letter, which she read over twice or thrice, and seemed to distrust the evidence of her own senses. It is very certain she expected nothing less than such an answer. She lifted up her eyes towards heaven, bit her lips, and for some time discovered, by her countenance, the pangs which her heart endured. Then, all of a sudden, addressing herself to me, "Friend (said she) is Don Lewis run mad? Tell me if you know why he writes to me in this gallant style. What dæmon possesses him? If he had a mind to break with me, could he not have done it without affronting me with such abusive letters?"

"Madam (said I) my master is certainly to blame; but he was in some measure forced to it. If you will promise to keep the secret, I will discover the whole mystery."—"I do promise; (said she, interrupting me with precipitation) don't be afraid of my exposing you, but freely explain yourself."—"Well, then (I resumed) this is, briefly, the affair. Immediately after he had received your letter, a lady, covered with a very thick veil, came to our lodging, and, asking for Signor Pacheco, spoke with him in private for a good while; and,

towards the close of the conversation, I overheard her to say to him, 'You swear to me that you will never see her again: but that is not all.—You must also, for my satisfaction, this instant write to her a billet which I will dictate, and this I exact of you.' Don Lewis did as she desired, then putting the letter into my hand, 'Enquire (said he) where Doctor Murcia de Lianna lives, and convey, with address, this paper to his daughter Isabella.'

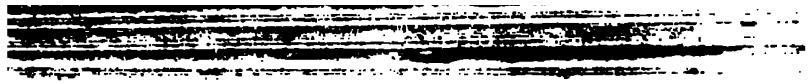
"So that you see, Madam (added I) this disobliging letter is the work of a rival, and consequently my master is not so much to blame."—"O heaven! (cried she) he is more so than I imagined. His infidelity injures me more than the spiteful words which his hand wrote. Ah, the perfidious wretch! he has entered into other engagements.—But (added she, assuming a lofty air) let him abandon himself to his new flame without constraint, I don't intend to thwart him. Tell him, that he had no occasion to insult me, in order to make me leave the field free to my rival; and that I despise such a fickle lover too much to have the least desire of recalling him." So saying, she dismissed me, and retired very much irritated against Don Lewis; while I went away very well satisfied with myself, and persuaded that if I should set up for a genius, I should soon become a most dexterous cheat.—I returned to our lodgings, where I found Mendoza and Pacheco at supper, conversing together as if they had been old acquaintances. Aurora, perceiving by my cheerful countenance that I had not acquitted myself ill of my commission; "So, thou art returned, Gil Blas (said she;) give us an account of thy message." Being obliged to trust to my own finesse again, I told them that I had delivered the packet with my own hand; and that Isabella, after having read the two billet-doux which it contained, instead of seeming disconcerted, fell a laughing like one who had lost her senses; saying, "Upon my conscience, young noblemen

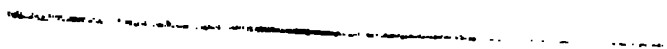
have an excellent style! It must be owned that other people don't write half so agreeably."—"A fine way of disembarrassing herself? (cried my mistress) she must certainly be a finished coquette."—"As for me (said Don Lewis) I should never know Isabella by such behaviour: she must have entirely changed her character during my absence."—"I could not have thought her such a person, indeed (replied Aurora,) but we must allow that there are women who can assume a great many different shapes: I was once in love with one of these, who made me her dupe a long time: Gil Blas, you can tell that she had an air of virtue which might have deceived the whole world."—"Yes, truly (said I, mingling in the conversation) she had a look that would have decoyed the most wary. I, myself, might have been trepanned by it."

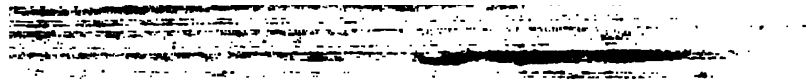
The pretended Mendoza and Pacheco burst into a loud laugh on hearing me talk thus: one, because I bore witness against an imaginary lady; and the other on account of the expression I had used. We continued discoursing of women who have the art of dissembling; and the result of our conversation was, that Isabella was accused in due form, and convicted of being an arrant jilt.

Don Lewis protested anew that he would never see her, and Don Felix, by his example, swore he would always have the most perfect contempt for her. After these protestations they professed a mutual friendship, and promised to conceal nothing from one another. Supper being over, they proceeded to compliments; and, at last, parted to go to bed, each in his own apartment. I followed Aurora to hers, where I gave an exact account of the conversation I had with the doctor's daughter; not forgetting the least circumstance. I thought she would have embraced me in the transport of her joy. "Dear Gil Blas (said she) I am charmed with thy understanding! When one is so unfortunate as to be engaged in a passion which compels us to have recourse to stratagem, it is a great advantage to have in our interests such a sensible young fellow as thee. Courage, my friend; we have removed a rival who might have given us a world of trouble. This is no bad prognostic: but as lovers are subject to strange relapses, I think we must make a strong push, and bring Aurora de Guzman on the stage to-morrow." I approved of the scheme, and leaving Signor Don Felix with his page retired to bed.

END OF VOLUME I.









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